MONDAY
January 8, 2024

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MALDIVES SUSPENDS 3 MINISTERS

India takes exception to remarks against PM

NEWS » PAGE 12

COURSES ON OFFER

Five IITs widen reach to Tier-2, Tier-3 cities

NEWS » PAGE 14

SEAT-SHARING TALKS BEGIN

Cong. names observers for 539 Lok Sabha seats

NEWS » PAGE 13

THE CRICKET ARGUMENT

Are there double standards in pitch ratings?

Rohit Sharma's remarks have kicked up a debate

OPINION » PAGE 11

BIG SETBACK

Injured Nadal to miss Australian Open

SPORT » PAGE 17

NEARBY

Case booked against Jarkiholi

BENGALURU
Gokak MLA and BJP leader Ramesh Jarkiholi has been booked on the charge of cheating the Karnataka State Cooperative Apex Bank over a loan with outstanding dues of ₹439.7 crore. » PAGE 6

CM announces grant to KCP

BENGALURU
Chief Minister Siddaramaiah announced a grant of ₹50 lakh to the Karnataka Chitrakala Parishath (KCP) on Sunday after inaugurating the 21st edition of the Chitra Santhe, organised by the parishath. He said that the government was committed to the development of art. » PAGE 2

EDUCATION PLUS » PAGE 5

J&K to have no local body members from tomorrow

They will complete five-year terms; next local body elections only after delimitation, says official; six MPs, district development council members are the only elected representatives remaining

Vijaita Singh
NEW DELHI

The people of Jammu and Kashmir, who have not had any Assembly representation since 2018, will cease to have any electoral representation at the grassroots level as well from Tuesday. The five-year term of almost 30,000 local representatives is set to expire on that date, and there is no clarity on when the next election to municipal bodies and panchayats will be held, as the Union government has decided to first conduct a delimitation exercise.

Panchayat elections were last held in the erstwhile State of J&K in late 2018. A total of 27,281 panches (panchayat members) and sarpanches (village headmen) were elected, and took the oath of office on January 10, 2019. There are 12,776 vacant sarpanch and panch seats in J&K.

Democratic deficit: The panchayat elections were last held in the former State of Jammu and Kashmir in 2018. NISSAR AHMAD

A senior Union government official told *The Hindu* that elections can be held only after a delimitation exercise is completed. On December 28, 2023, the Panchayati Raj Department sent letters to all block development officers in J&K, directing them to submit detailed proposals to redraw the boundaries of municipal wards and panch constituencies in such a way that each will have an equal number of electors, as far as possible. The letter added that the "matter may be treated as election urgent".

Anil Sharma, chairman of the All Jammu and Kashmir Panchayat Conference, pointed out that from January 10, the disbursal of the ₹25-lakh fund allocated to each panchayat will also cease, as the terms of the public representatives expire. "From January 10, there will be only half-a-dozen Members of Parliament and 20-odd District Development Councils representing J&K electorally. One of the MPs is a nominated member in the Rajya Sabha. We can in no way be compared with the parliamentarians. From January 10, government will not find people to hoist the tricolour in the remotest parts of the Union Territory," Mr. Sharma said.

CONTINUED ON
» PAGE 12

GST revenues reveal a dissonance in consumption growth across States

Vikas Dhoot
NEW DELHI

Amid worries about weak consumer spending trends, Goods and Services Tax (GST) revenues for the first nine months of 2023-24 reveal a dissonance in consumption growth across States, with Gujarat, West Bengal and Andhra Pradesh among a dozen-odd States that are seeing weaker growth.

Last Friday, the National Statistical Office estimated private final consumption expenditure (PFCE) would grow just 4.4% this year, the slowest since 2002-03, barring the pandemic-affected year of 2020-21. After recovering to 6% in the April-to-June 2023 quarter from below 3% in the second half of 2022-23, the PFCE growth slipped to 3.1% in the July-September quarter.

Uneven growth

Eight States, including Maharashtra and Tamil Nadu, saw more than 15% growth in GST collections so far this year. Gujarat and West Bengal are among the top 10 contributors with slower growth

Major States with higher growth		Major States with lower growth	
Madhya Pradesh	18.8%	Gujarat	9.5%
Maharashtra	18.2%	West Bengal	9.8%
Karnataka	18.1%	Odisha	10.7%
Haryana	17.6%	Rajasthan	10.9%
Uttar Pradesh	17.3%	Bihar	11.5%
Tamil Nadu, Telangana	16.9%	Andhra Pradesh	12.5%

Source: Ministry of Finance, Bank of Baroda research

While GST revenues have been robust through April-to-December 2023, growing at 11.7%, State GST collections have grown at a sharper pace of 15.2%. As GST is a consumption-based tax that can broadly signal the consumption trends in the economy, Bank of Baroda economists distilled the State-wise GST revenue inflows so far this year to assess if there are regional disparities in the consumption story.

CONTINUED ON
» PAGE 12

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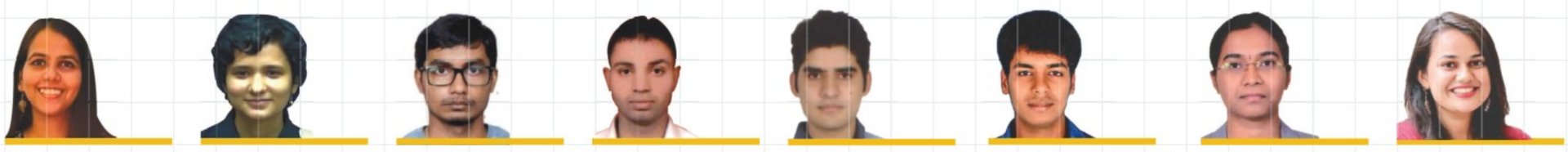

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Chennai's new superstars — embracing pressure and delivering at the death

The Quick Guns have flourished late to secure unlikely wins and nail-biting draws in five out of the eight games they have played this season

SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

Nigamanth P
CUTTACK

Like an M.S. Dhoni run-chase, Ultimate Kho Kho side Chennai Quick Guns have been winning matches in an emphatic fashion, embracing the pressure and delivering at the death.

The Quick Guns have lost just once this season and were floating in the top four throughout. Out of the eight games they've played, five of them have seen them flourish late to secure unlikely wins and nail-biting draws.

"Late comebacks aren't a coincidence. It's mostly strategic. There's only so much you can plan, and the rest is based on how the game pans out. But at the end of the day, for us, it's not about winning or losing; it's how best we can utilise the time we have," says Manohara, head coach of the Quick Guns.

"Co-ordination within the playing 11 is key. If you see our players, they rarely have slip-ups and make room for error, and that is one of the key reasons for our consistency," he adds.

The Ramji factor

At the heart of the Quick Guns is the omnipresent Ramji Kashyap, an all-rounder hailing from Maharashtra.

Ramji's impact on the Quick Guns can be traced in the stats column of the official UKK site. The 19-year-old's name can be seen in almost all categories, including the top defender and attacker lists. With 62 points on attack and a whopping 23:04 minutes on defence, Ramji has been a key figure in the Quick Guns' rise to the top.

Moment of brilliance

His moment of brilliance came during the match against the Gujarat Giants. Trailing 10-27 at one point, Chennai's chances of restoring parity, let alone winning the game, looked far from reality. With his batchmate Madan down, Ramji had the responsibility of rescuing his side from despair.

With his agility and constant change of direction, Ramji pulled off a defence for the ages. The all-rounder managed to bag five points, making his batch survive for a whopping 5:24 minutes.

What followed in the fourth and final turn was nothing short of a heist. Ramji and defender Laxman Gawas took turns to slowly but surely take the game away from the opposition. Chennai registered a dramatic 35-29 win and dethroned Gujarat from the top of the leaderboard.

The one match that the Quick Guns lost was against Telugu Yoddhas, which masterfully shut down defences from Ramji and Gawas by opting for the powerplay — a decision that enables the attacking team to play two Wazirs in a turn — at the right time.

Prizes galore

Three awards, including cash incentives, are given to the best-performing players after each match: best attacker, best defender, and Ultimate Kho, the last being equivalent to the man of the match award in cricket. Ramji has won the Ultimate Kho Award four times and the Best Defender Award once, totalling five awards in eight games.

Manohara is all praise for the all-rounder: "Ramji is a special character. He's a one-in-a-lakh kind of player, and he's born to play kho kho. He has all the ingredients that a player could possess, be it agility or footwork, and that is the reason he's been able to deliver both on attacks and defences," he says.

"Looking at how quickly he can adapt to situations, he can also play as a wazir in our upcoming matches. He works hard during training as well. In fact, he gets so invested that I get tired after instructing the drills for him," the coach added.

Ramji's hometown, Velapur in the Solapur district, had a deep-rooted kho kho culture, and that instigated him to join his school team while studying fifth grade. "I got into the sport very early, and the reason for that was two of my childhood coaches: Narayan Javender sir and Somanath Bandsude sir. They were impressed with my running speed and selected me for the school team," says Ramji.

Ramji believes he is what he is today because of his parents. He hails from a financially struggling family and says the tournament has helped a lot on that front.

Last year, apart from gifting a saree to his mother, all of his earnings went into his parents' savings. And this time, the monetary benefits are helping him bear the expenses for his sister's marriage.

Title contenders

However, the Quick Guns aren't just dependent on Ramji. They are one of the most well-rounded sides in the tournament this season.

They have Durvesh Salunke and Sachin Bhargo for the wazir role while also initiating attacks, and Gawas, who works in tandem with Ramji in defence.

After the hiccup against the Yoddhas, Chennai bounced back in style with a massive 41-18 win against a struggling Mumbai Khiladis and book a spot in the semifinal. The Quick Guns have their target firmly in their sight.

THE GIST

- Ramji Kashyap, an all-rounder hailing from Maharashtra, has been a key figure in the Quick Guns' rise to the top
- Ramji's hometown had a deep-rooted kho kho culture, and that instigated him to join his school team while studying fifth grade
- He's a one-in-a-lakh kind of player, and he's born to play kho kho, Quick Guns coach Manohara says

Perry's fairytale 300th game proves fortune favours the unyielding

EMMANUAL YOGINI & GETTY IMAGES

Lavanya Lakshmi Narayanan
CHENNAI

If you're watching Ellyse Perry play for the first time, you will never be able to tell she is a veteran player with over 15 years of international cricket behind her.

Her energy between the wickets and agility on the field have a 20-something vibe to it. However, do a double take when she's batting and you'll see her helmet at least five shades lighter than the batter at the other end, finally betraying the decade and a half of cricketing experience she has to her name.

A class apart

On Sunday, the first of 2024, Perry rang in a special milestone in the second T20I against India, an addition to a career embellished with achievements most athletes, irrespective of the discipline, can only admire and envy.

She became the first Australian woman to play 300 international games. Perry is the fourth to join this illustrious club which features legends like Mithali Raj, Charlotte Edwards and Suzie Bates.

Perry didn't get a chance to roll her arm at the D.Y. Patil Stadium on Sunday, but guided her side to a series-levelling win with a six.

"I've had so much pride and joy in being involved with the team for as long as I have been. Playing 300 games is definitely a special privilege," Perry said after the game.

The 33-year-old is the quintessential all-rounder, adept with bat and ball in equal measure and an absolute gun by the boundary ropes. She has 6,585 runs and 323 wickets across formats and is nowhere close to the finish line.

"It's kind of crept up on me in the last couple of days. It has really made me reminisce about where it all started, to my backyard where I would play the game with my dad and brother. It's miraculously turned into this career, where I am able to play around the world."

After the customary "how does it feel to get to 300, Ellyse", the natural follow-up has been "how about 400, Ellyse?"

The trademark Perry nonchalance followed.

"I don't know what's in store... but if it's meant to be down the track and I'm still around playing... I'm really open to what happens. I don't have a set timeframe on it. Either way it doesn't really matter, it's just another number."

Australian cricket is an unending assembly line of talent. If one, however decorated, does not click, he/she has to make way for another equally, or more, deserving candidate.

Perry, easily one of the most marketable faces of the women's game, was treated no differently, especially in the shortest format of the game, when she was dropped from the Australian T20I side in early 2022.

A loss of efficacy with the ball and a poor strike-rate with the bat meant Perry was struggling to keep younger suitors for her place in the team at bay.

She also travelled to Birmingham for the Commonwealth Games but a stress fracture consigned her to largely to the bench.

After announcing the shocking decision, national selector Shawn Flegler had this to say about one of the most dramatic calls in Australia's cricketing history.

"[Perry] played for Australia for a long time and is highly experienced, but we always want our players to develop and evolve. Ellyse is no different," he had said then.

A makeover

That flipped a switch somewhere in Perry as she gave her approach, particularly in the shortest format, a makeover. Incidentally, it was India against whom she notched up match-winning performances on her return to the side a few months later.

For someone who was criticised for her inability to find the boundary regularly and keep up with the changing demands of the T20 format, Perry amassed 319 runs in 10 innings at a strike-rate of 151.18 in 2023.

Throughout the ongoing tour of India, Perry has been able to break chokeholds set by the Indian bowlers and allow Australia to score at a healthy rate.

Her match-winning, unbeaten 21-ball 34 in the second T20I came at a 161.90 strike-rate and she fittingly finished the game with a maximum.

Change is the only constant and Perry has given the women's game a playbook on how it's never too late to widen one's repertoire.

With two ICC events in the subcontinent over the next 18 months and consistently impressive performances in diverse conditions, the warhorse will back herself for 400.

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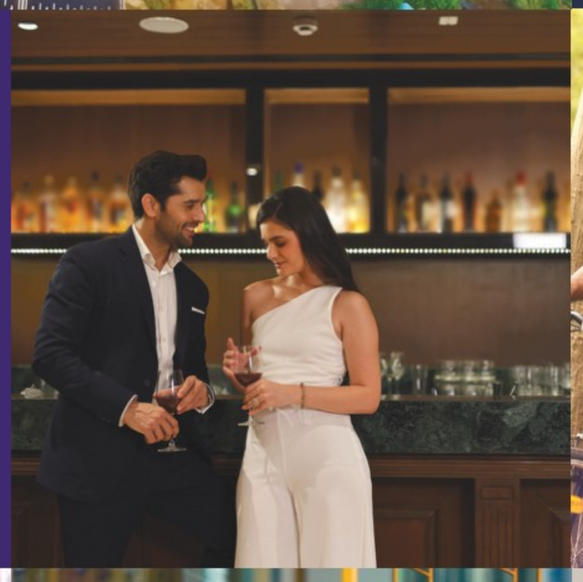

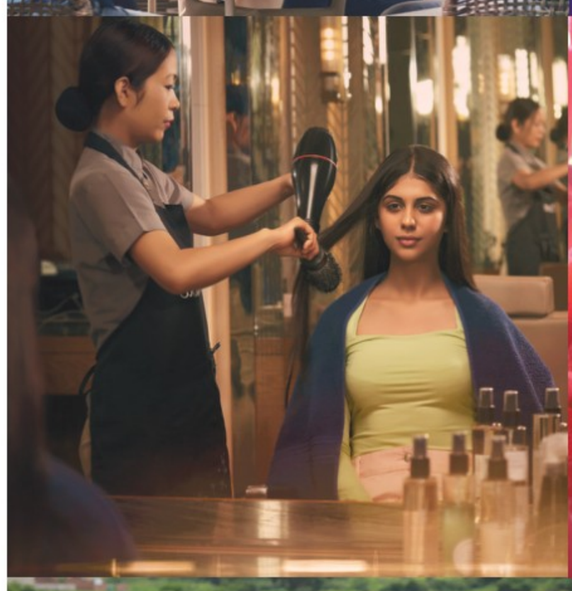

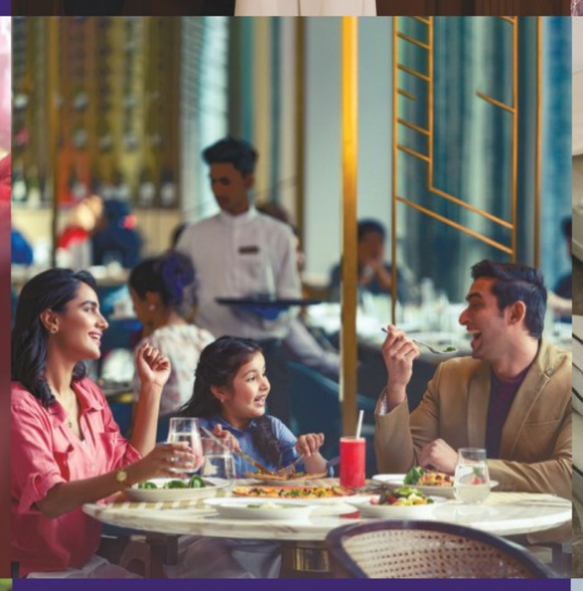

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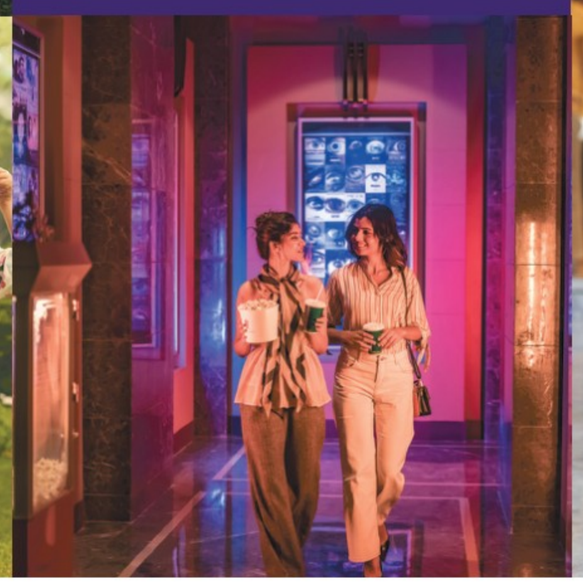

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At Chitra Santhe, CM announces a grant of ₹50L to Chitrakala Parishath

Siddaramaiah says government will provide all assistance to establish museums and art galleries in all districts of the State, especially in North Karnataka; over four lakh people visit the art fair, which was not limited to just the Kumara Krupa Road this time

The Hindu Bureau
BENGALURU

Chief Minister Siddaramaiah announced a grant of ₹50 lakh to the Karnataka Chitrakala Parishath (KCP) on Sunday after inaugurating the 21st edition of the Chitra Santhe, organised by the parishath. He said that the government was committed to the development of art.

> It was also reported that the business was approximately around ₹4 crore to ₹5 crore this year.
>
> **B.L. SHANKAR,**
> President, KCP

Further, the CM said that in order to establish museums and art galleries in all districts, especially North Karnataka, the State government will provide all the necessary assistance. "Around three to four lakh people participate in this programme every year. It is a matter of pride that 1,600 artists from 22 States also take part," he said.

He also lauded the KCP for dedicating the Chitra Santhe to Space scientists this year.

The art fair, which was not limited to just the Kumara Krupa Road this time, attracted over four lakh people, the organisers said. "The footfall was above four lakh with an hour to spare for the closing. It was also reported that the business was approximately around ₹4 crore to ₹5 crore this year," said B.L. Shankar, president, KCP.

The extension of the venue to Seva Dal grounds and to the service road below the Shivananda Circle flyover helped in the distribution of the crowd, said Appajaiah K.S., general secretary at KCP. "Instead of everyone gathering on the same road and resulting in a dense atmosphere, the crowd was evenly spread" he said.

Around 1,500 artists, including around 250 specially-abled and senior artists, displayed their artwork at the santhe this year.

"We did not reject any applications from specially-abled and senior artists for the festival. This time we were also very stringent in scrutinising the acts. All the registrations and transactions were paperless too," said Gomathi Gowda, Principal of the College of Fine Arts at KCP.

Visitors at the Chitra Santhe. an annual art fair organised by the Karnataka Chitrakala Parishath, on Sunday. K. MURALI KUMAR

Bengaluru keeps its date with art at a packed Chitra Santhe

Varying prices for works

Surabhi Gorebal and Rishabh Sachdeva
BENGALURU

For 21 years now, the Karnataka Chitrakala Parishath (KCP) has organised a date with art for Bengaluru in the form of the Chitra Santhe and without fail, patrons show up in large numbers and encourage artists.

This year was no exception. Over 4 lakh people attended the annual art fair resulting in business of around ₹5 crore on Sunday.

The roads around the parishath had turned into vibrant art galleries buzzing with artists and enthusiasts, many who had come from different corners of the city.

Prarthna Gupta, a businesswoman, exclaimed, "This is such an amazing marketplace, a delight for art lovers like me. I have already spent around ₹90,000, and I am sure I will end up buying more."

It seemed like there was something for everyone - from senior citizens to first-time visitors.

The Hindu Bureau
BENGALURU

The artworks at Chitra Santhe were priced anywhere between ₹200 and ₹4 lakh.

Vinod Kumar N., who specialises in pyrography, a unique art form involving burning or scorching designs onto wood or leather, reportedly sold the highest priced painting.

His painting 'Hampi - a UNESCO World Heritage Site' came with a price tag of ₹4 lakh. "Pyrography got me inspired to be an artist," he said.

Mahadeva Shetty, 56-year-old artist, presented a painting of a sculpted village house door priced at ₹3 lakh. Mr. Shetty emphasised the importance of preserving heritage and culture, noting, "These days, we do not see such sculpted doors anywhere. I want to convey the message to preserve such beauty which we have lost in urban spaces," he said.

"When I went through the first few stalls, I thought everything was super expensive and I could not find anything relatable and affordable. But, to my surprise, I found a cute stall selling artwork which was focussed on Gen - Z culture which I ended up buying" said Tushar Khandelwal, a pilot who had come to the fair.

"I did not really come to buy anything, but I've already picked a few small pieces because they are irresistible," said Raman Reddy, a student.

While the visitors were not shy to go on an art shopping spree, many complained about the sunny weather which made it difficult to stroll around the fair.

A retired Railways employee Shaktikanta Iyer said, "My shopping adventure at Chitra Santhe was a delight although the weather was not entirely cooperative. Predicting this, I came here a little earlier and managed to snag some beautiful paintings before much of the hustle and bustle began."

Around 250 specially-abled and senior artists took pride in displaying their works this year.

Shivajyoti Dasgupta, one of the specially-abled artists, was selling his work which was priced between ₹300 and ₹500. Mr. Dasgupta's twin sister narrated his story, highlighting the artist's resilience and unwavering belief in the power of human expression through art.

A senior artist, Sunil Kumar V. Mathad, had displayed his painting of Hampi which was priced at ₹1 lakh. "Hampi and Belur are our beautiful historical sites where stone has been sculpted into beautiful art. I painted this one with the intention that whoever ends up buying this, can sit and look at this and enjoy it while sipping a cup of tea after a day of working at their job," Mr. Mathad explained.

With lakhs of people gathered and traffic restrictions in place, there were a few traffic snarls in the areas surrounding the Kumara Krupa Road.

With BMTC offering feeder services and Namma Yatri offering free autorickshaw rides, many visitors were happy with the public transport arrangements this time while some reported delays in bus services.

Fair on millets and organics sees business transactions of ₹170 crore

A stall at the international trade fair on millets and organics in Bengaluru. SUDHAKARA JAIN

The Hindu Bureau
BENGALURU

The three-day international trade fair on millets and organics that concluded in Bengaluru on Sunday saw total business transactions of ₹170 crore.

According to Agriculture Minister N. Cheluvarayaswamy, this included B2B transactions of ₹150 crore and transactions in stalls amounting to ₹20 crore.

It may be noted that the main intention of the annual fair was to provide a common platform for all stakeholders in the sector of millets and organics to boost the exports of the State's millets and organic produce.

The idea is to make sure that the millets and organic produce reaches consumers, and to also help provide remunerative markets to farmers, observed an official.

The B2B business agreements pertained to the transaction of 17,192 MTs of produce, the officials pointed out. In all, the fair witnessed 213 B2B meetings and signing of 41 letters of intents/MoUs.

The business transactions pertained to all varieties of millets, Byadagi chillis, spices, organic jaggery, turmeric powder, and organic vegetables. The fair witnessed a huge demand for millet value-added products like cookies, malts, millets powder, ready-to-cook and ready-to-eat items etc.

The fair, which was inaugurated by Chief Minister Siddaramaiah, saw an estimated 2 lakh visitors in the last three days.

It also saw the participation of delegates from various States besides other countries, including Australia, the U.A.E., Kenya, and Kuwait. In all, the fair had 310 stalls, including 100 under the Karnataka pavilion that were dedicated to farmers, research institutes, and FPOs. It also saw the participation of 35 start-ups engaged in millets and organics business.

Addressing the valedictory function, Mr. Cheluvarayaswamy said 51 subject experts had delivered lectures at the fair.

Deputy Chief Minister D.K. Shivakumar hailed the authorities concerned for organising such an event. Union Minister for Agriculture Arjun Munda hoped that millets and organic cultivation methods would provide a solution to the country's water woes and issues with soil fertility.

Referring to the popularity of millets and organics in Karnataka and its prime position in the sector, Revenue Minister Krishna Byre Gowda observed that Karnataka had also emerged as capital of millets and organics in addition to being a IT and BT hub.

Text & Context and Science

Weekday features on *The Hindu* epaper (epaper.thehindu.com) carries explainers, special articles and quizzes. In the latest issue (January 8, Monday), the following articles are available:

- Why is child marriage still high in West Bengal? **bit.ly/bengalchildmarry**
- IIT-Delhi team makes first hi-res landslide risk map for India **bit.ly/riskmapindia**

You can use your smartphone's inbuilt features to access these articles. If it's an Android phone, use Google Lens to read and tap the url to access an article. If it's an iPhone, use Live Text on camera to do the same.

COVID-19: Health Dept. issues norms for healthcare facilities

The Hindu Bureau
BENGALURU

Karnataka recorded a total of 329 COVID-19 positive cases on Sunday taking the tally to 1,181. The death of one patient was also reported on the day.

While 1,118 patients are currently in home isolation, 63 have been hospitalised, 13 are in ICUs, and one is in an Isolation bed with oxygen support.

The Health and Family Welfare Department also issued a circular on Sunday with guidelines for standard precautions for immediate implementation at all healthcare facilities.

"The objective of these guidelines is to establish and reinforce standard precautions, a set of infection prevention practices aimed at preventing the transmission of infectious agents, with a particular focus on COVID-19. These measures are crucial to safeguard both healthcare workers and patients, minimising the risk of infection spreading within healthcare settings," the circular said.

The standard precautions include hand hygiene, appropriate use of personal protective equipment, respiratory hygiene and cough etiquette, and others.

'IIHR technologies helped improve food and nutrition security in States'

The Hindu Bureau
BENGALURU

Various technologies developed and promoted by ICAR - Indian Institute of Horticultural Research (IIHR) have had a great impact on tribal areas in many States, noted Arjun Munda, Union Minister of Agriculture and Farmers Welfare, during his maiden visit to IIHR on Sunday.

He said that eight major technologies from the institute were selected and disseminated to 300 beneficiaries in Jharkhand to improve soil fertility and the nutritional status of people. He added that crops like Mucuna can help with that and many vegetables and fruits which are also being promoted there are helping in the improvement of food and nutrition security in tribal areas.

"Major fruits like jackfruit, guava, mango, papaya and all vegetables including gourd, brinjal, tomato, French bean and others as well as several technologies have been promoted by this institute in many States like Jharkhand, Chhattisgarh, Ladakh, Lakshadweep, North-Eastern regions, Uttar Pradesh, Himachal Pradesh, and the tribal areas of Madhya Pradesh," Mr. Munda said.

He also noted that over 150 technologies were commercialised and licensed so far through the commercial wing of ICAR, Agri - Innovate, and have been generating approximately ₹4 crore revenue every year.

The Minister also said that over 100 entrepreneurs had benefited from novel technologies like Dogridge rootstock in grapes, Arka Rakshak in tomato, and Arka Prajwal in tuberose, among others.

Highlighting the contribution of horticulture in the agricultural economy of the country, Mr. Munda said that the horticulture sector is gradually turning into an organised industry.

"In India, horticulture production has increased 14 times from 25 million tonnes in 1950-51 to 350 million tonnes during 2022-23, exceeding the foodgrain production. This has been possible only with the use of new technologies and varieties," he elaborated.

The Union Minister also signed Memorandums of Understanding with various organisations, including the Karnataka Exotic Fruit Farmers' Association and the Kalaisingam Academy of Research and Education, Tamil Nadu.

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India's rich heritage - wear handloom fabrics with pride

IIT-Delhi team makes first hi-res landslide risk map for India

The 'Indian Landslide Susceptibility Map' is the first of its kind by virtue of being on a national scale, leaving out no locations in the country. The map and the researchers' study will be published in the journal *Catena* in its February 2024 issue

Rohini Subrahmanyam

In late 2023, torrential rain during the northeast monsoon triggered heavy floods and landslides in multiple States in North India, killing hundreds of people. Given the number of fatalities due to landslides in India, a national landslide susceptibility map can help identify the most dangerous areas and help allocate resources for mitigation strategies better.

Unfortunately, India didn't have a landslide susceptibility map at the scale of the whole country then - so Manabendra Saharia, an assistant professor in the civil engineering department and head of the HydroSense Lab at IIT Delhi, wanted to make one.

A landslide in Krishna Nagar ward, in Shimla, on August 19, 2023, after heavy rains. PTI

Data with 'latest techniques'

Landslides are a unique and deadly problem in India. Unlike floods, they're less widespread and harder to track and study with satellites. Landslides happen in very localised areas and affect only about 1-2% of the country. As a result, there is much less data of sufficient quality for typical machine-learning models to work with.

"We wanted to build a national landslide susceptibility map that not only uses the data but also uses the latest techniques," Dr. Saharia said.

So his graduate student Nirdesh Sharma first collected the data of known landslides in the country. He obtained nearly 1.5 lakh such events via the Geological Survey of India (GSI) and other, including global, sources.

Then, the duo collected information on the factors that rendered an area susceptible to landslides. Some of them are soil cover (or the type of soil in the area), the number of trees covering the area, and how far it is from any roads or mountains. The fewer trees there are in a place, the closer it is to road-building activity, and the steeper the local slope, the more unstable the place will be and thus more prone to landslides.

The two researchers gathered information from across the country on 16 such factors, which they called landslide conditioning factors. They said GeoSadak, an online system that has data on the national road network in India, was particularly helpful because it displayed data on roads even outside cities.

"Most of the landslides don't happen in cities, they happen in far off areas where we can't see them," according to Dr. Saharia.

The researchers were particularly interested in landslide susceptibility in areas for which there was no data about known landslide events. Some of these places were just too uninhabitable or inaccessible, like the treacherous sides of mountains without roads.

An ensemble of models

Finally, they had two things in hand: 150,000 data points for known landslide events and 16 factors that, in their estimate, rendered an area susceptible to landslides. Mr. Sharma had been able to collect information about these factors for the whole country.

He and Dr. Saharia decided to use ensemble machine learning methods to analyse the data. Ensemble machine learning is when multiple machine learning models are used together to average out an oversize impact from any one model.

Once the models were ready, the researchers used them to make projections for all the areas for which there wasn't any landslide data. That is, even if a landslide had not (yet) occurred at a particular place, the ensemble could estimate its susceptibility to one based on the 16 factors and patterns in the data.

'An excellent contribution'

After all the analyses, and with the help of GSI's extensive collection of landslide data, they developed a high-resolution landslide susceptibility map. Here, they could plot the susceptibility at a resolution of 100 m. That is, they estimated the susceptibility for each 100 sq. m parcel across the whole country.

This map, which they called the 'Indian Landslide Susceptibility Map', is the first of its kind by virtue of being on a national scale, leaving out no locations in the country. The map and the researchers' study will be published in the journal *Catena* in its February 2024 issue. The authors will include G.V. Ramana, also of the civil engineering department in IIT-Delhi.

> Given the number of fatalities due to landslides, a national landslide susceptibility map can help identify the most dangerous areas and help allocate resources better

"The *Catena* paper is an excellent contribution," Madhavan Rajeevan Nair, former Secretary of the Ministry of Earth Sciences, said in an email. "For the first time, the authors have mapped the entire country for landslide probabilities, that too at high resolution. The map will help the policymakers to assess vulnerability and take appropriate measures for mitigation."

Early warning system

The map acknowledged some well-known regions of high landslide susceptibility, like parts of the foothills of the Himalaya, the Assam-Meghalaya region, and the Western Ghats. It also revealed some previously unknown places with high risk, such as some areas of the Eastern Ghats, just north of Andhra Pradesh and Odisha.

News reports have described landslides in this area in the past, but the GSI hasn't had data from there.

The researchers said they want to build on data from the map and develop a 'Landslide Early Warning System' for India. The map is also expected to be useful for organisations involved in investigating and mitigating landslides, like the GSI, the Ministry of Mines, and the National Disaster Management Authority.

Map available online

Dr. Saharia and his group are also in the process of building an infrastructure vulnerability map - a cartogram that will depict the stretches of roads, railways, and buildings that are particularly vulnerable to landslides.

He is also keen that people use the data from the paper, which is being made available for free via a web-based interface. This way, he said, people will be able to look through the map themselves and explore regions of interest to them. When a user clicks anywhere on the map, in any district or state, the interface will display how much of that place is susceptible to landslides.

"The map is publicly available and accessible; one doesn't need technical knowledge to interact with the data," Dr. Saharia said.

(Rohini Subrahmanyam is a freelance journalist.)

THE GIST

Landslides are a unique and deadly problem. They are less widespread and harder to track and study with satellites. Landslides happen in localised areas and affect only about 1-2% of the country. As a result, there is much less data of sufficient quality for typical machine-learning models to work with

Researchers prepared two elements for analysis: 150,000 data points for known landslide events and 16 factors that rendered an area susceptible to landslides. Information about these factors was collected for the whole country

Machine learning models were used to make projections for all areas for which there wasn't any landslide data. That is, even if a landslide had not occurred at a particular place, the ensemble could estimate its susceptibility to one

BIG SHOT

A snow-covered driveway, on Sunday, at Derry, in New Hampshire, the United States. Parts of New England are expected to receive about a foot of snow from a winter storm. AP

Panspermia: life from one world to the next

Arkatapa Basu

The question of how life began has invited numerous hypotheses. One that has prevailed since ancient Greece is panspermia. It was first posited by the Greek philosopher Anaxagoras (500-428 BC), who coined the term and first articulated life's potential to travel as 'seeds' between planets. While this concept found echoes in the thoughts of other philosophers of his time, such as Anaximander and Thales, it remained in the realm of the speculative for many centuries until scientific advances in various fields brought it into focus.

Some of the more important studies demonstrated that microorganisms could endure the extreme conditions that come with being ejected from a planet, navigating the rigours of interplanetary travel, and withstanding the impact of reaching a new world.

Nineteenth-century researchers, including Swedish scientist Svante Arrhenius, also contributed to this discourse by suggesting mechanisms – like radiation pressure from the Sun – that microorganisms could be propelled by through space.

In its modern version, the idea of panspermia advances three stages: escape from a planet, transit through interplanetary space, and landing on another planet.

Panspermia claims that planets were seeded across space with life brought in by interstellar bodies. GETTY IMAGES/ISTOCKPHOTO

But because panspermia simply attributes the origin of life on one planet to a different planet, it doesn't actually explain how life came to be. It is in fact a fringe theory in the scientific community because scientists agree that it is hard – if not impossible – to prove.

It has also become the seed of many controversies, including one suggesting the interstellar object 'Oumuamua was an alien object engaged in panspermia.

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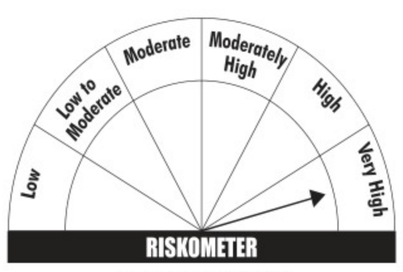
Benchmark



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Text&Context

THE HINDU

NEWS IN NUMBERS

The Rohingya camps which were gutted in the widespread fire

1,040 A fire raced through a crammed camp of Rohingya refugees in Cox's Bazar, Bangladesh. Fire in refugee camps is common and in March, a fire left several refugees temporarily homeless. AP

The number of NCC cadets to join the Navy as Agniveers

350 Navy Chief Admiral R. Hari Kumar asserted that the National Cadet Corps (NCC) has consistently produced dedicated and determined people to service the country. Agniveers are recruits under the Agnipath scheme. PTI

The number of U.S. defence companies sanctioned by China

5 China announced sanctions on Sunday in response to U.S. arms sales to Taiwan and U.S. sanctions on Chinese companies and individuals. Such sanctions are mostly symbolic as American defence contractors generally don't sell to China. AP

The number of journalists killed in the Israel-Gaza war

79 The death toll includes two journalists — Mustafa Thuria, a video stringer for *AFP* news agency, and Hamza Wael Dahdouh, a journalist with *Al Jazeera* — who were killed by an Israeli air strike in Palestinian territory on Sunday. AFP

The discrepancies in GDP numbers for FY24

2.59 In ₹ lakh crore. As per NSO, discrepancies were (-) ₹3.80 lakh crore in 2022-23. Discrepancies refer to the difference in income under the production method and the expenditure method. PTI

COMPILED BY THE HINDU DATA TEAM

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Rise in child marriages in West Bengal

Why are girls getting married early despite receiving an education? Have the cash incentives for girls to study not been effective? What is the feedback from the districts? Is it a social problem or a political issue? What is the link between child marriage and poor maternal health?

EXPLAINER

Shiv Sahay Singh

The story so far:

A recent study on child marriage in India published in the *Lancet* noted the overall decrease in child marriage across the country but pointed out that four States, mainly Bihar (16.7%), West Bengal (15.2%), Uttar Pradesh (12.5%), and Maharashtra (8.2%) accounted for more than half of the total headcount burden of child marriages in girls.

What are the key findings?

The paper titled 'Prevalence of girl and boy child marriage across States and Union Territories in India, 1993-2021: a repeated cross-sectional study' highlights that one in five girls are still married below legal age in India. The publication states that while some States have achieved dramatic decreases in prevalence and headcount for child marriage in girls, "other states have struggled, such as West Bengal".

"The largest absolute increase in headcount was observed in West Bengal, representing an increase of 32.3% in headcount (difference n=500346)...West Bengal saw the largest absolute increase with over 5,00,000 more girls getting married as children," the paper said. Child marriage, particularly girl child marriage, has posed a challenge for policy-makers in West Bengal for decades. The National Family Health Survey-5 carried out in 2019-20, points out that the women aged 20-24 years who were married before the age of 18 years in West Bengal remains one of the highest in the country at 41.6%. The percentage was the same during the National Family Health Survey- 4. The all-India figure of women aged 20-24 years getting married before they turn 18 is pegged at 23.3%.

What has been the impact?

While child marriage is considered a human rights violation and a recognised form of sexual and gender-based violence, the adverse impact of child marriage is manifested across maternal and child health in the State.

Days before the *Lancet* study was published, 10 infants died at Murshidabad Medical College and Hospital in a span of 24 hours. The hospital authorities said the majority of the children were born with extremely low birth weight. Amit Dan, principal of the medical college, said one of the babies was born weighing only 480 grams. "We could not save the child. What we are dealing with is a social problem. Because of child marriage and poverty, children are born with a low birth weight and sometimes doctors are not able to save them," Dr. Dan said.

Murshidabad, one of the economically poorer districts of the State, has one of the highest numbers of child marriages in West Bengal. The NFHS - 5 points out that 55.4% of women aged 20-24 years are married before the age of 18 years in the district. The district saw a rise from NFHS-4 numbers, which stood at 53.5 %.

What have been the policy interventions?

The West Bengal government has made a number of policy interventions to stop child marriage. Launched in October 2013, Kanyashree Prakalpa is a conditional cash transfer scheme aimed at incentivising the schooling of all teenage girls between the ages of 13 and 18, and simultaneously discouraging child marriage. The scheme has completed 10 years and was recognised at an international level with a United Nations Public Service Award 2017. The West Bengal Budget for the year 2023-24 said the scheme has covered 81 lakh girls.

While the school enrolment of girls has increased in the State, questions are being posed based on NFHS data and the *Lancet* study of whether the scheme has achieved its promise of arresting child marriage. In 2023, the West Bengal Higher Secondary Examination, also referred to as the Class XII board exam, saw a 14.84% increase in female candidates. The number of girls appearing in the examination was 1.27 lakh higher than boys and totalled 57.43% of the total candidates. The All-India Survey of Higher Education for 2020-21 also puts the number of estimated enrolment of girls in West Bengal at 9.29 lakh, which is higher than the boys enrolment which stood at 8.63 lakh.

Sabir Ahamed, national research coordinator of Amartya Sen's Pratichi Trust, agreed that girl's enrolment in schools has "significantly increased over the past few years and yet the incidence of child marriage remains high in West Bengal".

"It remains a puzzle for policy planners and researchers. There is a stride in educational attainment, which has not translated into increased participation of women in the workforce either," Mr. Ahamed said. Researchers like Mr. Ahamed point out that surprisingly there is no direct correlation between literacy rate and child marriage. Despite high literacy, the incidence of child marriage is also disproportionately high in some districts: for example, the Purba Medinipur district with over 88% literacy rate has the highest incidence of child marriage of more than 57.6% as per NFHS-5. Experts also link child marriage with migration as a significant population of the State go out to work in other States. "There is a significant migratory population who goes to other States to work and they don't want to leave unmarried daughters at home. Also, the men who are married to these girls want their wives to have children when they go out for work," Dr. Dan said, explaining the vicious cycle.

Along with Kanyashree, the State government also has cash incentive schemes for marriage of girls named 'Rupashree Prakalpa'. Certain families avail cash benefits of both the schemes to organise marriage of girls, sometimes soon after cashing in on the school scheme.

Are laws not being implemented?

Along with social issues there are issues regarding implementation of laws on child marriage. The Ministry of Women and Child Development in response to a question by MP Chandrani Murmu in August 2023 gave details of cases registered under The Prohibition of Child Marriage Act (PCMA), 2006 over the past five years across the country. In 2021, West Bengal registered 105 cases under PCMA 2006 whereas States with a smaller population and lesser instances of child marriage registered more cases, like Tamil Nadu, which registered 169 cases, Karnataka 273 and Assam 155 cases respectively.

The Ministry also added that to curb child marriage, the Government had introduced the Prohibition of Child Marriage (Amendment) Bill, 2021 in Parliament in December 2021 for raising the age of marriage of women to 21 years to bring it on par with the men and the Bill has been referred to a Parliamentary Standing Committee.

What lies ahead?

Experts point out that West Bengal has emerged as an example where cash incentives and existing laws have failed to check child marriages.

In 2022, the West Bengal government called for a district action plan to curb child marriage and issued necessary guidelines.

However, in the absence of a social campaign involving all stakeholders including panchayats, schools and local communities and without a political will to enforce the existing laws the situation at the grass roots will not improve as rapidly as it has in other parts of the country.

Towards change: West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee at an event to mark 10 years of Kanyashree Prakalpa. DEBASISH BHADURI

THE GIST

The *Lancet* paper titled 'Prevalence of girl and boy child marriage across States and Union Territories in India, 1993–2021: a repeated cross-sectional study' highlights that one in five girls are still married below legal age in India.

"The largest absolute increase in headcount was observed in West Bengal, representing an increase of 32.3% in headcount (difference n=500346)...West Bengal saw the largest absolute increase with over 5,00,000 more girls getting married as children," the paper said.

Researchers like Mr. Ahamed point out that surprisingly there is no direct correlation between literacy rate and child marriage. Despite high literacy, the incidence of child marriage is also disproportionately high in some districts.

Timings
BENGALURU

MONDAY, JAN. 08		
RISE	06:44	SET 18:08
RISE	03:26	SET 15:02
TUESDAY, JAN. 09		
RISE	06:44	SET 18:09
RISE	04:25	SET 15:58
WEDNESDAY, JAN. 10		
RISE	06:44	SET 18:09
RISE	05:28	SET 16:59

Bengaluru Weather	max	min
Tumakuru	30	23
Mysuru	29	21
Bengaluru	29	19

Bengaluru Today
27°C Morning will be slight cool with mist and haze. Day will be comfortable but humid. Spell of light rain D thundershower will occur.

Bengaluru Tomorrow
28°C The weather will be comfortable but humid. Night will be slight cool and hazy. Spell of light rain and thundershower to occur.

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THE HINDU
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31-metre U-girder successfully cast for suburban railway project

The Hindu Bureau
BENGALURU

A 31-metre, single-span U-girder was successfully cast on Saturday night at the casting yard in Devanahalli for the Bengaluru Suburban Rail Project (BSRP).

According to Infrastructure Development Minister M.B. Patil, so far 28-metre U-girders have been used in other metro projects. This is the first time in the country it has been planned to use 31-metre U-girders for BSRP. "These girders will be used to construct a viaduct (elevated section) of around 8 km from Hebbal to Yeshwanthpur which is a part of the Mallige line or Corridor 2 of BSRP," he added.

In a release, the Rail Infrastructure Development Company (Karnataka) Limited (K-Ride) said that each of these U-girders, which allow the track to be laid right away, is made of 69.5 cubic metres of M60 grade concrete and weighs 178 tonnes and Corridor 2 requires 450 such U-girders.

"Claimed as an engineering marvel, this 31m U-girder has been designed by Assystem STUP and proof-checked by IIT-Madras. Third-party design evaluation has been done by a General consultant (JV of Egis, Aecom and WSP). Supervision, precision execution, and quality control were closely monitored by K-RIDE," the release stated.

These girders will be used to construct a viaduct (elevated section) of around 8 km from Hebbal to Yeshwantpur . SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

BMTC to procure 120 midi buses to connect narrow roads

Transport corporation issues tender to choose service provider for procurement, operation, and maintenance of the buses; presently, BMTC operates midi buses on city routes

Darshan Devaiah B.P.
BENGALURU

As the demand for midi buses which can connect narrow roads and cover interior places in Bengaluru has increased, the Bengaluru Metropolitan Transport Corporation (BMTC) has invited a tender to induct 120 non-AC midi electric buses through the gross-cost contract (GCC) model.

The BMTC recently issued the tender to choose a service provider for the procurement, operation, and maintenance of 120 nine-metre non-AC electric buses. "We've initiated the tender to acquire 120 electric midi buses for metro feeder services. These buses will navigate narrow roads, serving both inner-city locations and the outskirts in response to high demand for such mini buses," a senior official from the BMTC told *The Hindu*.

The buses will be equipped with intelligent transport management system, passenger display boards, among others

Officials further said that the introduction of these buses follows the GCC model, as part of the National Clean Air Programme and the State Urban Transport Fund , managed by the Directorate of Urban Land Transport.

Presently, the BMTC operates midi buses on city routes, along with highly sought-after metro feeder buses. Following two incidents of buses catching fire within just 10 days in February 2022, the BMTC temporarily halted the operation of 186 midi buses. These 9.2-metre-long buses, shorter than the standard 12 metres, accommodate approximately 30 passengers.

The 120 midi buses will be equipped with features such as an intelligent transport management system, passenger display boards, CCTV camera systems, panic buttons, etc.

Recently, Chief Minister Siddaramaiah flagged off 100 electric buses in the BMTC fleet and announced that the BMTC will get 1,400 electric buses by April, 2024.

The initial batch of 100 electric buses is part of the larger fleet of 921 buses that the BMTC is incorporating under the Faster Adoption and Manufacturing of Electric Vehicles (FAME-II) scheme by the Union government.

Labourer caught smuggling marijuana

The Hindu Bureau
BENGALURU

The Cantonment railway police caught a 45-year-old labourer from Odisha trying to get out of the station and recovered 5.9 kg of marijuana concealed in a backpack on Saturday.

The personnel noticed the accused, Narahari Bariki, a resident of Banapur in Odisha, getting down the Prashanthi Express and waiting at the platform checking for exit routes without security.

Suspecting something, the personnel confronted him and checked his bag to find the drugs. An initial probe revealed that the accused had bought the drugs from peddlers from Khurda district.

Judging by the way the drugs were packed, the police suspect that Bariki is part of a professional inter-State peddlers network and investigation is on to ascertain his contacts.

READER'S MAIL

Bus service beneath expressway

Sir, – Except those on route number KIA-9 from Majestic, all BMTC Vayu Vajra AC buses from various city points to the Kempegowda airport presently ascend the airport expressway after Hebbal.

The KIA-9 buses travel on the road beneath the expressway. After the recent launch of the Mall of Asia, these buses often get stuck in traffic.

The BMTC authorities should reconsider whether it still serves the purpose of running buses on the road below the expressway.

Because most commuters on this route travel end to end, the service can be split into two by apportioning the fleet based on demand: one, marked KIA-9E, taking the expressway, and the other, marked KIA-9L, taking the road below. Alternatively, the existing stops after Hebbal can be shifted to suitable spots at various ground-level deviations of the expressway.

Kamal Laddha,
Bengaluru

Date change on bus pass

Sir, – Every year, people with disabilities are given yearly bus pass during February and it is mentioned as from January 1 to December 31 clearly. Now, a few people are asked to pay for the travel or they are forced to get down after the expiry of the pass, after December 31.

My suggestion is they can change the date in the pass from March 1 to February 28/29 to avoid any inconvenience to persons with disabilities. Otherwise, they have to get updates from the bus depot for the circular mentioning that the pass has been extended up to February-end and beg conductors to allow them to travel.

S.S.P. Iyer,
Bengaluru

Readers can email to letters.bangalore @thehindu.co.in

PUBLIC NOTICE

The General Public is hereby informed that my client is intending to purchase the below mentioned schedule property from its owner **Sequent Penems Private Limited** (PAN:AAOCS3943H) Registered Office:Star-1 Opp.IIM,Bilekahalli,Bannerghatta Road, Bengaluru -560 076. Represented by Sri Shirdhar Kela, Director.

If anybody is having any objection, claim, interest, dispute with respect to, the above intended sale transaction, he/she/they may contact the undersigned with the documentary proof substantiating his/her/their objections/ claims/details of dispute/s within 15 (Fifteen) days from the date of this publication, failing which, my client will proceed to complete the sale transaction with the above owner as If there are no third party claims/ objections/disputes in respect of the Schedule Property and thereafter no claims/objections/disputes will be entertained.

SCHEDULE PROPERTY

All that piece and parcel of land admeasuring 4635.75 Sq.mtrs known as Plot No.11 of Jigani Industrial Area I Phase, formed out of Sy Nos. 117,122 & 552 situated at Jigani village, Jigani Hobli Anekal Taluk Bangalore District, together with all the structures constructed there on, bounded by the:

East by : Plot No. 10-A;
West by : 40' wide KIADB Road No. 3;
North by : Private property; and
South by : Plot No. 11-A.

Dated: 08/01/2024
Place: Bengaluru

Harshavardhan B. Sharma
#103/1 Dr. DVG Road, Basavanagudi
Bengaluru - 560 004

PUBLIC NOTICE

My clients intend to purchase the below mentioned Schedule Property from Mr. Umashankar Bhut V. S/o Vishwanath Bhat & Mrs.Vidyalakshmi Bhat U.,both R/a 07-03,The Waterside Apartments, No.3, Tanjong Rhu Road, Singapore 436881 Any person/s who has/have any right, claim or interest in the said property or any part thereof may notify to the undersigned along with proof of such claims/objections to such sale **within 7 days** from this day, failing which my client will proceed to purchase the schedule property assuming that there are no claims, right or interest whatsoever.

SCHEDULE PROPERTY

Residential Villa No. **178** in **"BEECH"** type in **"PRESTIGE OZONE"** built on the Schedule B Property (Plot No. 178, forming portion of Hagadur Village, K.R.Pura Hobli, Bangalore East Taluk, totally measuring 4000 sqft) consisting of Ground & First Floor, totally having a built up area of 3190 sq. ft, BBMP Khatha No.895/B-Plot No.3/177/Villa No. 178 & bounded on the: **East by**: Villa No.179 in "CHESTNUT" type of "PRESTIGE OZONE", **West by**: Villa No. 177 in "ACORN" type of "PRESTIGE OZONE", **North by**: Villa No. 175 in "BEECH" type of "PRESTIGE OZONE" and **South by**: Internal Layout Road of "PRESTIGE OZONE".

Harsha C. Mensinakai
Advocate, Tarka Legal,No.15/1, 3rd Main,Sadashivanagar, B'lore-80
Mobile: 98803 8930.

WEST BENGAL STATE ELECTRICITY TRANSMISSION COMPANY LIMITED
(A Government of West Bengal Enterprise)
Registered Office: Vidyut Bhavan, Block-DJ, Sector-II, Bidhannagar, Kolkata-700 091
CIN: U40101WB2007SGC113474 • web: www.wbsetcl.in
WBSETCL

E-TENDER FOR THE FOLLOWING WORKS ARE INVITED:-

NIT No.: CE(P)/WBSETCL/ 400 & 220 KV ISO/23-24/22 Date: 08.01.2024	Procurement of Isolators. Bid documents can be downloaded from **08.01.2024**, **12:00 Noon** and bids shall be submitted (online) up to **04:00 P.M., 06.02.2024.**
NIT No.: CE(P)/WBSETCL/ PDINS & BPI/23-24/23 Date: 08.01.2024	Procurement of Porcelain Disc Insulators & Solid Core Bus Post Insulator. Bid documents can be downloaded from **08.01.2024**, **12:00 Noon** and bids shall be submitted (online) up to **04:00 P.M., 05.02.2024.**
NIT No.: CE(P)/WBSETCL/ 33 KV Isolator/23-24/24 Date: 08.01.2024 ***(2nd Call)***	Procurement of 33 kV Isolators. Bid documents can be downloaded from **08.01.2024**, **11:00 A.M.** and bids shall be submitted (online) up to **04:00 P.M., 06.02.2024.**
NIT No.: CE(P)/WBSETCL/ 132 & 66kV ISO/23-24/25 Date: 08.01.2024 ***(2nd Call)***	Procurement of Isolators of 132 kV & 66 kV Voltage Class. Bid documents can be downloaded from **08.01.2024**, **12:00 Noon** and bids shall be submitted (online) up to **04:00 P.M., 05.02.2024.**

Visit the following websites:- www.wbtenders.gov.in, www.wbsetcl.in for details.
ICA- T396(31)/2024

GOVERNMENT OF KARNATAKA,
Zilla Panchayath, Vijayanagara,
Office of Executive Engineer, Rural Water Supply and Sanitation Division, Hospet Vijayanagara District.
No.: EE/RDWS&SD/HPT/JJM/E-Proc Tender/JE/2023-24/949 Dated:05-01-2024

E-tender Notification-07/2023-24.
(KTTP Act 2000)

On behalf of the Governor of Karnataka, Executive Engineer, Rural Drinking Water Supply and Sanitation Division, Hosapete hereby invites the tender for FY-2023-24 JJM FHTC (Retrofitting) works in Kudligi Taluk Works of Vijayanagara District through e-procurement. The information regarding tenders will be made available in **(www.kppp.karnataka.gov.in) Website**. The period to receive the tender from eligible bidders is from **05-01-2024 to 11-01-2024 at 5.00 PM** and date of **opening of technical bid is on 12-01-2024 at 5.05 PM, opening of Financial bid is on 17-01-2024 at 11.00 AM** For further more information contact above said Office.

Sd/- Executive Engineer,
RDW & S Division, Hospet.
DIPR/Vijayanagar/319/KSMCA/2023-24

Encore Asset Reconstruction Company Private Limited
5th Floor, Plot No. 137, Sector- 44 I Gurgaon- 122002 Ph: 0124 - 4527200

Rule 8(1) POSSESSION NOTICE

Whereas,

Encore Asset Reconstruction Company Private Limited (**'Encore ARC'**), acting in its capacity of being Trustee of EARC-Bank-022-Trust, has acquired all rights, titles and interests of Bharat Co-operative Bank (Mumbai) Ltd in the financial asset pertaining to loan accounts detailed below originated by Bharat Co-operative Bank (Mumbai) Ltd under section 5 of the Securitisation and Reconstruction of Financial Assets and Enforcement of Security Interest Act 2002, (SARFAESI Act, 2002) vide Assignment Agreement dated 16-10-2020.

And whereas, Authorised Officer of Encore Asset Reconstruction Company Private Limited (Encore ARC), in exercise of powers conferred under Section 13(12) of the SARFAESI Act, 2002 read with Rule 3 of the Security Interest (Enforcement) Rules, 2002 (Rules), had issued demand notice No. EARC/23-24/50/HBM/01 dated 01.09.2023 calling upon the Borrowers to repay the amount as detailed below together with further interest at contractual rate and costs within 60 days from the date of receipt of the said notice:

SI NO	Loan Account Number/s	Borrowers / Co-borrowers / Guarantor	O/s Dues as mentioned in Demand Notice (INR)
1.	(I) 002133510066223, (ii) 002133510066287, (iii) 002133510066409, & (iv) 002133510066427	Mr Harish Bhoja Mulki Prop M/s Grand Krishna Rooms, Late Shri N M Annaiah now represented by his legal heirs (i) Shri NA Venugopal, & (ii) Shri NA Ravigopal, & Mr Dilip Bhoja Salian (Guarantor in Loan Account No. 002133510066223))	7,33,47,412.00/ as on 31.07.2023

The borrowers having failed to repay the amount, notice is hereby given by the undersigned being the Authorised Officer of Encore ARC, to the Borrowers and the public in general that the undersigned has taken possession of the properties described in Schedule below (**'said property'**) in exercise of powers conferred on me under sub-section (4) of section 13 of SARFAESI Act, 2002 read with Rule 8 of Security Interest (Enforcement) Rules, 2002 on 06.01.2024

The Borrowers in particular and the public in general is hereby cautioned not to deal with the said property and any dealings with the said property will be subject to the charge of Encore Asset Reconstruction Company Private Limited for amount detailed above together with further interest with effect from 01.08.2023 and other admissible costs and expenses.

Note: The owner / Mortgagor of the said property Late Shri N. M. Annaiah, now represented by his legal heirs (i) Shri NA Venugopal, & (ii) Shri NA Ravigopal, is co-borrower in another Term Loan of Rs.7,30,00,000/- also, bearing account No. 002133570000016 having outstanding dues of Rs.11,12,87,838/- as on 31.07.2023 with further interest from 01.08.2023 and other admissible costs and charges, which has also been assigned by Bharat Co-operative Bank (Mumbai) Ltd. to Encore ARC.

Encore ARC reserves rights to appropriate surplus sale proceeds, if any, towards mortgagor's other liability detailed above by exercising right of lien/set off.

The Borrowers' attention is invited to provisions of sub-section (8) of section 13 of the SARFAESI Act, 2002, in respect of time available, to redeem the secured assets.

This notice is issued in supersession of earlier Possession Notice which has stood withdrawn hereby.

SCHEDULE
Immovable Property:

All that piece and parcel of land bearing site no.77 (formed out of Sy. No.11/6) situated on Hosur Main Road, Madiwala, Bangalore – 560 068 land admeasuring 41,302.75 sq.ft., together with building constructed thereon and bounded:
East by: Remaining portion of the property of Shri V Chinnaswamy Madaliar
West by: Land belonging to Shri A. D. Kumaraswamy
North by: Remaining portion of the land in Sy no. 11/6 and
South by: Remaining portion of the land in Sy no. 11/6.

Date : 06.01.2024
Place : Bangalore
Sd/- (Padmakumar S) Authorised Officer,
Encore Asset Reconstruction Company Private Limited

aavin ED.912. THE SALEM DIST.CO-OP. MILK PRODUCERS' UNION LTD.,
Sithanur, Thalavaipatti Post, Salem- 636 302
Cell No:7373704800 / 7373704802 Fax No: 0427 -2386871 E-Mail: aavinslm@gmail.com

E-TENDER CALL NOTICE

Two part tender for the contract work for empty tubs unloading, tub's cleaning, milk sachets weight checking, stacking in tubs, transfer tubs from conveyor to cold storage rooms for storage, transfer tubs from cold storage rooms to despatch dock, loading into the vehicles, leak milk sachet segregation, milk despatch record and office work, milk pumping and film roll loading in the machine's cleaning of floor areas near machine, conveyor, cold rooms and despatch dock daily and related other works for three shifts in prepac section at Salem dairy for 24 (twenty four months) period from the date of execution of agreement by the tenderer.

This Two Part tender form contains the schedules as indicated below:

1	Date and Time for Pre-Bid meeting	**23.01.2024 at 11.00 A.M.**
2	Last date & time for online submission of the Two part Tender both Technical bid and Commercial bid	**05.02.2024 upto 09.00 A.M.**
3	Date & Time for opening of Tender documents **(Part-I, Technical bids only) online**	**05.02.2024 at 11.00 A.M.**
4	Place for opening of the Sealed tender documents	**The Salem District Co-Op. Milk Producers' Union Ltd., Sithanur, Thalavaipatty P.O., Salem-636 302**

Details of Tenders, EMD, S.D, Terms and Conditions, Works & others can be downloaded at **www.tntenders.gov.in** on free of cost. The tender documents can be submit through **https://www.tntenders.gov.in** (online mode) only.

DIPR/ 88 /TENDER/2024
GENERAL MANAGER

GOVERNMENT OF ODISHA
Mail ID :- sepwdsbp@rediffmail.com
OFFICE OF THE CHIEF CONSTRUCTION ENGINEER, NORTHERN (R&B) CIRCLE: SAMBALPUR
e - Procurement
BID IDENTIFICATION No CCENC(R AND B) /30/ 2023-24
No.7159 Dtd.29.12.2023

1. The **Chief Construction Engineer, Northern (R&B) Circle, Sambalpur** on behalf of Governor of Odisha invites **Percentage Rate** bids in double cover system **in ONLINE MODE** for the construction of **Building Works** as detailed in the DTCN from the eligible class of contractors.
2. No of works = **06 (SIX) (Buildings Works)**
3. Tender Cost : **Rs.10,000/-**
4. Class of contractor : **"B" Class and "A" Class.**
5. Date & Time of available in web site & receipt of Bids : From **08.01.2024 to 17.00 Hours of 22.01.2024.**
6. Date of opening of Technical Bid : **22.01.2024 at 18.00 Hours.**
7. The Bidders have to participate in ONLINE bidding only. Further details can be seen from the website **www.tendersodisha.gov.in**.
8. Any corrigendum / Addendum will be displayed in the website **www.tendersodisha.gov.in**.

Chief Construction Engineer, Northern (R&B) Circle, Sambalpur.
B-1567 : OIPR-34035/11/0035/2324

KMF Karnataka Cooperative Milk Producers' Federation Limited
KMF Complex, Dr. M.H. Marigowda Road, DRC Post, Bangalore-560 029.
Tel: 080-25536625 / 25536789 fax: 080-25536105

IFT No: KMF/ENGG/ Mother dairy-30KL THE/1804//2023-24 Date: 04-01-2024

SHORT TERM TENDER NOTIFICATION

[TWO COVER SYSTEM] [THROUGH E-PROCUREMENT PORTAL ONLY]

Karnataka Milk Federation Ltd; Bangalore invites tender from the eligible suppliers / manufacturers through E-procurement for the works mentioned in the table below. The interested and reputed suppliers / manufacturers who have handled similar kind of works may participate in the tender as indicated below, by logging on to website https://www.kppp.karnataka.gov.in and also contact Help desk E-mail; hphelpdesk.blr@intarvo.com and helpline No. 080-25501227/ 25501216.

Sl. No.	Name of the work	Qty.	EMD (Rs.)	Period of Completion
1	Supply Installation & Commissioning of 1 No 30KLPH Tubular heat exchanger and related works for CIP for milk processing section at Mother Dairy Yelahanka, Bangalore	1 Job	Rs. 35,400/-	2 Months

1. Tender schedules may be downloaded from dated: 8-01-2024 to 16-01-2024 up to 4.00 pm.
2. Last date for Tender submission on date:16-01-2024 up to 4.00 pm
3. Tender [Part 1] to be opened on date: 17-01-2024 at 4:30 pm.

For Karnataka Co-Opp. Milk Federation Ltd.
Sd/- Director [Engineering-2]

BANGALORE WATER SUPPLY AND SEWERAGE BOARD

INVITATION FOR TENDERS
(Only through KPP portal)

BWSSB invites Tenders from Registered agencies for the following works.

Office of the Chief Engineer (South), 7th Floor, Cauvery Bhavan, K.G.Road, Bangalore-560 009.

Sl. No.	Division	IFT Number	Amount Put to Tender(Rs.) / EMD Amount(Rs.)	Last date & Time for submission of tender	Date and time for opening of tender
1.	South-2	BWSSB/EES2/PB/1496/2023-24 Dated: 30.12.2023 (2nd Call)	Rs. 31,90,867/- / Rs. 75,304/-	16.01.2024 upto 04:00 pm	18.01.2024 after 04:00 pm

Sd/- Executive Engineer (South-2)

Office of the Chief Engineer (K-O&M), 6th Floor, Cauvery Bhavan, K.G.Road, Bangalore-560 009.

2.	(K-O&M)-1	BWSSB/EE(K-O&M)-1/AE/2023/03/ 2191/2023-24 Dated: 02.01.2024	Rs. 19,34,100/- / Rs. 50,000/-	22.01.2024 upto 04:00 pm	23.01.2024 after 04:00 pm

Sd/- Executive Engineer (K-O&M)-1

Office of the Chief Engineer (Project), 3rd Floor, Cauvery Bhavan, K.G.Road, Bangalore-560 009.

3.	Project-1	BWSSB/EE(Project)-1/PB/479/ 2023-24 Dated: 05.01.2024	Rs. 73.22 Lakhs / Rs. 1.47 Lakhs	23.01.2024 upto 12:00 pm	24.01.2024 after 02:00 pm

Sd/- Executive Engineer (Project)-1

Office of the Chief Engineer (WWM-EAST), 5th Floor, Cauvery Bhavan, K.G.Road, Bangalore-560 009.

4.	(WWM-STP) CV	BWSSB/EE(WWM-STP)CV/PB/349/ 2023-24 Dated: 30.12.2023	Rs. 37,50,000/- / Rs. 88,500/-	16.01.2024 upto 04:00 pm	18.01.2024 after 11:00 am
5.		BWSSB/EE(WWM-STP)CV/PB/352/ 2023-24 Dated: 30.12.2023	Rs. 14,23,240/- / Rs. 35,600/-		

Sd/- Executive Engineer (WWM-STP)CV

The details regarding the tender and participation in the e-procurement portal process can be obtained by logging on to **https://kppp.karnataka.gov.in.** For further details contact the above signed office during working hours.

DIPR/CP/KAVITA/2896/2023-24

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CONTACT :
MR. SEVENRAJ
98450 20007
98457 17777
sevenraj@gmail.com

PERSONAL

CHANGE OF NAME

I, PRIYANKA dilip mali, w/o ravindra savanta kore, r/o flt no 102, vinay residency, maruthi ngr, kaikondrahalli, sarjapur rd, blr–35. have changed my name as "priyanka ravindra kore" vide afdvt dtd 03/01/24.

I, A. BALACHANDER, residing permanently at Flat No–F2, No.105, Saravana Nagar, 2nd Street, Madambakkam Main Road, Rajkilpakkam, Chennai, Selaiyur, Kancheepuram, Tamilnadu –600073. I have changed my Sons name from TRANAV to B. TRANAV vide affidavit dt:28/12/2023 before notary VEENA. J, Bangalore.

Published by Nirmala Lakshman at No 19&21, Bhagwan Mahaveer Road, Bengaluru-560001 and Printed by C. Sridhar at Plot No. 13-D, Bommasandra-Jigani Link Road, KIADB Industrial Area, Bommasandra, Anekal Taluk, Bengaluru-560099 on behalf of THG PUBLISHING PVT LTD., Chennai-600002. Editor: Suresh Nambath (Responsible for selection of news under the PRB Act).
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CACHE

GETTY IMAGES

How voice cloning through artificial intelligence is being used for scams

Voice clone fraud has been on the rise in India. A report published in May last year revealed that 47% of surveyed Indians have either been a victim or knew someone who had fallen prey to an AI generated voice scam. The numbers are almost twice the global average

Poulomi Chatterjee

A few years ago, voice cloning through Artificial Intelligence (AI) was just a phenomenon of mild amusement. AI-generated songs by famous artistes like Drake and Ariana Grande were floating around online. However, fears around the AI software were realised when AI voice cloning-related scams burgeoned. In April last year, a family living in Arizona, U.S., was threatened to pay ransom for a fake kidnapping pulled off by an AI cloned voice. And scams weren't the end of it. Easy access to AI voice clones also spawned disinformation.

Earlier in January, 4chan users started flocking to free AI voice cloning tools to generate celebrity hate speech, wherein Harry Potter actress Emma Watson read out a portion of the *Mein Kampf* and conservative political pundit Ben Shapiro made racist comments against Democrat politician Alexandra Ocasio-Cortez.

Why is India a major target for AI voice clone scams?

Similar incidents have made their way in India. A report titled 'The Artificial Imposter' published in May last year revealed that 47% of surveyed Indians have either been a victim or knew someone who had fallen prey to an AI generated voice scam. The numbers are almost twice the global average of 25%. In fact, India topped the list with the maximum number of victims to AI voice scams. Even as several cases went unreported, some came to light. In December, a Lucknow resident fell prey to a cyberattack that used AI to impersonate the voice of the victim's relative, requesting the person to transfer a substantial amount through UPI. Another report in August stated that a man from Haryana was duped of ₹30,000 after a call was made from a scamster who used an AI app to sound like the victim's friend in dire need of money due to an accident.

Indians have been found to be particularly vulnerable to scams of this nature. According to McAfee, 66% of Indian participants admitted that they would respond to a voice call or a phone call that appeared to be from a friend or family member in urgent need of money, especially if the caller was supposedly a parent (46%), spouse (34%) or their child (12%). The report stated that messages that claimed the sender had been robbed (70%), involved in a car accident (69%), lost their phone or wallet (65%) or needed financial aid while travelling abroad (62%) were the most effective excuses.

While these tools aren't perfect, scammers have relied on creating a sense of exigency to glide over these flaws. The report also shared that 86% Indians were prone to sharing their voice data online or via voice notes at least once a week which has made these tools potent.

How are voice clones done?

Once a scammer finds an audio clip of an individual, all it takes is to upload their voice clip to the online program that is able to replicate the voice accurately barring some intonations. There's a host of these applications online with popular ones like Murf, Resemble and Speechify. While most of these providers have a monthly subscription fee from under $15 for basic plans to $100 for premium options, they have a free trial period.

An especially lauded one has been a year-old AI startup called ElevenLabs that was founded by former Google and Palantir employees. The Andreesen Horowitz-backed firm has been releasing a steady stream of tools. In October last year, it released a product called AI Dubbing which can translate even long-form speech into 20 different languages.

In mid-December, former Pakistani Prime Minister Imran Khan's political party used an AI-generated speech from the now imprisoned leader in an attempt to rally for votes virtually. Mr. Khan had reportedly sent his party a shorthand script from jail which was later edited and then dubbed by ElevenLabs.

Prominent tech companies also have a hand in the AI voice game now. Recently, Meta launched SeamlessM4T, an open-source multilingual foundational model that can understand nearly 100 languages from speech or text and generate translations in real-time. Apple introduced a voice cloning feature in iOS 17 intended to help people who may be in danger of losing their voice say to a degenerative disease.

ChatGPT, the poster boy for AI chatbots also has a voice transcription feature that can be used for cloning. But OpenAI has been careful to partner with specific parties to prevent the illegal use of these capabilities.

YouTube took a similar route and announced Dream Track which partners with just 100 creators in the U.S. that would allow them to create song clips featuring AI vocals with permission from pop stars like Demi Lovato, Sia and John Legend.

What can be done?

The speed and easy access of these tools have sent alarm bells ringing. In November last year, the U.S. Federal Trade Commission or FTC launched a Voice Cloning Challenge which asked the public to send in their ideas to detect, evaluate and monitor cloned devices. Just yesterday, the contest posted a prize of $25,000 for the winner. The FTC is also considering the adoption of a recently-proposed Impersonation Rule that will help deter deceptive voice cloning.

But the pace at which generative AI releases are moving has regulators gasping for air. On January 2, researchers from Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT) and Tsinghua University in Beijing, China, and members of AI startup MyShell released OpenVoice, an open-source voice cloning tool that is almost instant and offers granular controls to modify one's voice that isn't found on other such platforms.

And the segment is only expected to grow exponentially. A report by Market US has revealed that the global market for these applications stands at $1.2 billion in 2022 and is estimated to touch almost $5 billion in 2032 with a CAGR above 15-40%.

KNOW YOUR ENGLISH

He has become a homebody

He binge-watched all the episodes of the show in just one day while binging on chips

S. Upendran

"Haven't seen you in a while. Where did you go?"

"Had about ten days of leave remaining. So, decided to go somewhere I've never been to – Sikkim! Guess who I met there?"

"The only person I know in Sikkim is Sujatha's sister, Jyothi. Was it her?"

"Yes, it was! Asked her to come over for dinner at the hotel. But you know..."

"Jyothi's a homebody. She probably refused to join you."

"That's right! Instead, she invited me over to her place. She's a fantastic cook. By the way, does 'homebody' mean someone who likes staying at home?"

"That's right! A 'homebody' is a person who is most comfortable in familiar surroundings."

"In other words, this person hates going out. Doesn't like to travel."

"I guess you could that. When a homebody has to travel, he does so, reluctantly. The word sometimes carries with it a hint of disapproval. Vijay's friends are complaining that since marriage, he's become a homebody."

"I don't think there's anyone in my family who is a homebody. Even my grandmother loves seeing new places."

"It's also possible to say 'homebird'. It has the same meaning as 'homebody'."

"Don't waste your time inviting Jyothi to parties. She's a homebird."

"During weekends, Ramakanth is a homebird. Spends a lot of his time looking after the garden."

"Tell me, how is b..i..n..g..e pronounced. Is it like..."

"It rhymes with the words, 'hinge', 'cringe' and 'tinge'. It is..."

"In other words, it rhymes with the second syllable of 'syringe'!"

"That's right! Do you know what 'binge' means?"

"My friends always talk about binge-watching several episodes of a series. Yesterday, I binge-watched four episodes of *Reacher*."

"That's a good example. When you 'binge-watch', you spend your time watching several episodes of a show – one after another. I plan to binge-watch the first two seasons of *House*."

"That's a pretty old television series."

"Yes, it is! But I haven't watched it in a while. The word 'binge' has other meanings. Do you know what they are?"

"Not a clue."

"The word can be used as a noun and a verb. When used as a noun, it means to do something excessively. It could be eating, drinking, shopping, etc."

"When he didn't get selected for the team, Atul went on a drinking binge."

"That was a stupid thing to do. Can you give me examples of binge as a verb?"

"Whenever I am sad, I binge on sweets."

upendrankye@gmail.com

Word of the day

Bowdlerise:
edit by omitting or modifying parts considered indelicate

Synonyms: shorten, castrate, expurgate

Usage: *The new draft has been bowdlerised.*

Pronunciation: bit.ly/bowdlerisepro

International Phonetic Alphabet: /ˈbaʊd.ləˌɹaɪz/

For feedback and suggestions for Text & Context, please write to **letters@thehindu.co.in** with the subject 'Text & Context'

THE DAILY QUIZ

Please send in your answers to dailyquiz@thehindu.co.in

January 8 is internationally observed as Typing Day. A quiz related to the same

Srinivasan Ramani

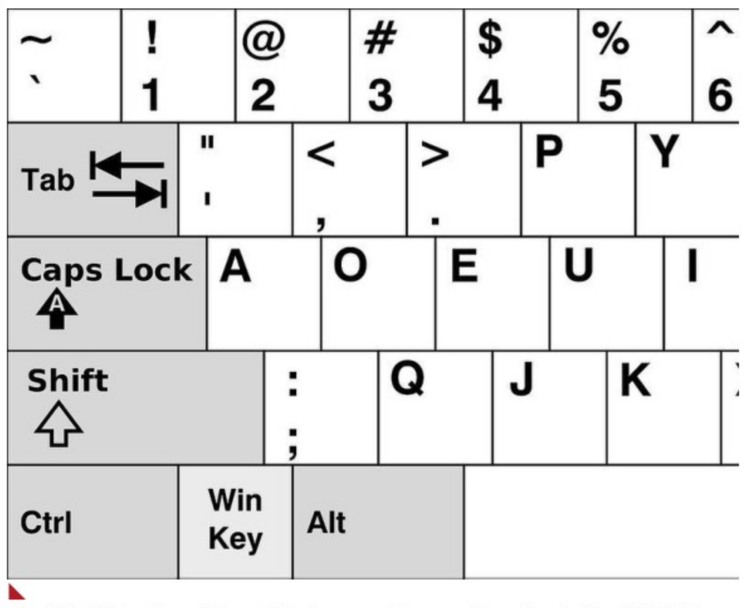
QUESTION 1
A newspaper publisher in the United States, this person played a key role in the abolition of capital punishment in the State of Wisconsin. He is also credited with the invention of the QWERTY keyboard for the earliest typewriters. Name him.

QUESTION 2
There is the myth that the QWERTY combination was introduced by the inventor to prevent jamming of the typewriter due to the slowness of recovering to original position when common letters were used. What alternative and more plausible explanation was given for the QWERTY layout?

QUESTION 3
The answer to Question 1 obtained a patent for a "Type-Writer" that became among the earliest devices that allowed users to type faster than a person could write by hand. Name the promoters to whom this patent was sold to?

QUESTION 4
The promoters (Answer to Question 3) tied up with which other firm, then known for manufacturing sewing machines, firearms among others, to commercialise the typewriter?

QUESTION 5
One of the first Devanagari script based typewriters was designed in Germany close to the year 1930 and named Nagari Lekhan Yatra, which was later built and sold by the company that is the answer to Question 4. Name the person who designed it.



Identify this keyboard layout that emerged as an alternative to the QWERTY layout and claimed to be a faster and more ergonomic option compared to the legacy QWERTY.

Questions and Answers to the January 5 edition of the daily quiz: 1. This American motor company introduced the eight-hour workday 110 years ago. **Ans: Ford Motor Company**
2. This country became the world's first to institute an eight-hour workday by law for workers of all sectors. **Ans: Spain**
3. In this country, the eight-hour workday was introduced four days after a historic revolution that toppled a short-lived government. **Ans: Soviet Union**
4. In 1919, this organisation established the Hours of Work (Industry) Convention. **Ans: International Labour Organisation**
5. In China's '996' working-hour system, the numbers 9, 9, and 6 stand for this. **Ans: Work from 9 am to 9 pm, six days a week**
Visual: Name the event depicted in this engraving. **Ans: Haymarket Square riot**
Early Birds: K.N. Viswanathan| Akshansh Thakur| Yogapriya Karthigeyan| Vivek Khaiwal Laprana| Subrata Sen

Labourer killed after iron rod falls on his head

The Hindu Bureau
BENGALURU

A 21-year-old construction labourer was killed in a freak accident, when an iron rod from a scaffolding fell on his head at an underconstruction site at Veeranapalya in Electronics City on Saturday. The deceased has been identified as Deepankar Chasa, from Tripura.

The police said that the incident occurred when he was working on one of the floors and the 20-feet iron rod detached from the scaffolding and fell on his head from a height of 100 feet.

According to the police, Chasa had come for work a few days ago along with his uncle and was staying at a rented house on Hosa Road.

Based on a complaint, the police have registered a case of causing death due to negligence against the contractor and the owner of the building.

Presidency School organises Campus Career Fest

The Hindu Bureau
BENGALURU

Presidency School, Kasturinagar, on Saturday organised Campus Career Fest for students of Classes IX to XII. The event was designed to provide students with invaluable opportunities to explore diverse career paths and featured personnels from a multitude of institutions.

A release stated that the fest served as a platform for students to gain a deeper understanding of their career options, enabling them to make informed decisions about their future.

Foundation day of BIS

The Hindu Bureau
BENGALURU

The Bureau of Indian Standards (BIS), Bengaluru, celebrated its foundation day recently to create awareness about the importance of standardisation to the Indian economy and to promote its role in helping meet the needs of business, industry, government, and consumers.

THE HINDU

EDUCATIONPLUS

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Train the mind to think

Why cultivating critical thinking in Liberal Arts Education is becoming increasingly important in today's world

V. Krishnappa

GETTY IMAGES/ISTOCKPHOTO

Albert Einstein once wrote that the true value of "college education is not learning many facts but the training of the mind to think." Facing irreducible complexity and uncertainty in the social, economic, political, environmental and technological domains in our time, educators globally are searching for ways to make educational experiences relevant for the demands of contemporary workplaces.

There is an urgent need to bridge the 'skill deficit' in critical thinking and other career-enhancing skills. Increasingly, educational institutions are adapting the liberal arts model of education, which places equal importance on both knowledge acquisition and skill development to enhance learners' capacities to skillfully adapt to emerging complex environments. The ability to think while doing, embrace uncertainty, deal with emergent novelty, and give creative expression to complex developments are seen as more critical than the capacity to process information, facts and recombine existing knowledge. The twin challenges of Artificial Intelligence and the growing complexities of the modern workplace are leading us to look for a new educational process that gives primacy to critical thinking and creativity, which orientates learners to appreciate the complex nature of human interactions, and socio-economic and political developments. Trained to see more sides to a problem, learners will resist the temptation to make quick judgements and advance over-simplified solutions that might end up creating more problems than they intended to solve.

Interpreting events

Human events are marked by the ambiguity of their meanings. An ability not only to interpret but also treat all interpretations as perspectives that need to take into account other viewpoints is a form of intelligence that is much in demand in managerial decision-making and strategic action. The ability to add layers of meaning to novel events and take into consideration points of view that may contradict one's own is more likely to enhance creative possibilities.

Human situations are marked by increasing uncertainty. No amount of prior learning and foresight will be sufficient basis for decision-making and action as the recent events. An ability to judge the odds, imagine the possibility of failure, adapt to emergent novel developments, and recalibrate one's interventions in an alert and ongoing manner will be the mark of a masterful innovator and expert manager. Critical-thinking training takes the uncertainty of human situations as a cardinal starting point and prepares students to develop psychological strategies and attitudes to cope with uncertainty.

Strategies

Critical-thinking orientation takes seriously the idea that true education is not merely the transfer of the latest states of knowledge but, more importantly, is about orientation for continuous learning. In our fast-changing world, knowledge becomes irrelevant quickly. In a world marked by fast-paced globalisation and technological change, an ability to critically understand the self and others is crucial for cross-cultural communication and psychological well-being. Further, an ability to navigate cultural complexity, respect otherness, accommodate difference, cultivate empathy, and spot creative possibilities will be highly valued attributes in the contemporary workplace.

In order to train students in critical thinking, liberal arts educators have adopted a range of pedagogical strategies. Typically, institutions emphasise the importance of good reading, often placing a premium on reading time-tested classics, which provide a rich training ground for critical thinking. Educators have for long recognised the importance of learning to write well in order to think well.

Many institutions systematically teach writing skills during the foundation year to develop not only better communication skills but also to develop the faculty for critical thinking. Reading, writing, and thinking are the three key university skills and one cannot learn one without also learning the other two. A holistic training in liberal arts should train the learner simultaneously how to read well, write richly, and think critically.

Views expressed are personal.

The writer is Professor at School of Liberal Arts and Sciences and Executive Director of the Mahatma Gandhi Centre for Contemporary Ethics at RV University, Bengaluru.

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Karnataka Top 20 Educational Institute Survey 2023
(Ranking Edition June 2023) By-THE ACADEMIC INSIGHTS
India's Top 50 Non IIM's B Schools Survey 2023
(Ranking Edition June 2023) By-THE ACADEMIC INSIGHTS
COLLEGE OF THE YEAR 2022 Review- Dec 2022
(Source: The Higher Education Review)
Beyond IIMs, IIBS stands in 3rd Position under 100 top MBA Colleges in India.
Survey 2021 (Source: The Higher Education Review)
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Corporate Mentoring
Alumni Mentoring
Faculty Mentoring
Placement Mentoring
Five Months Paid Internship
Two Months Paid winter Internship
Three Months Paid Summer Internship
54% Faculty with PhD & from Corporate
Industrial Visits
16 + Industrial Visits in two years
85% Experiential Learning
IIBS Offers total 16 Specialization in MBA/ PGDM
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Italian Boot Camp
French Boot Camp
Japanese Boot Camp
Australian Boot Camp
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M BG-BGE

Case against Ramesh Jarkiholi for allegedly cheating co-op bank

The MLA has been booked for cheating Karnataka State Cooperative Apex Bank over a loan with outstanding dues of ₹439.7 crore

The Hindu Bureau
BENGALURU

Gokak MLA and BJP leader Ramesh Jarkiholi has been booked on the charge of cheating the Karnataka State Cooperative Apex Bank over a loan with outstanding dues of ₹439.7 crore.

The FIR was registered at the Vishveshwara Puram police station recently based on a complaint by Rajanna, General Manager (Banking), Karnataka State Cooperative Apex Bank.

The case pertains to a host of business loans, for Mr. Jarkiholi's Gokak-based sugar factory Soubhagya Lakshmi Sugars Ltd., taken from 2013 to 2017. During this time, Mr. Jarkiholi was with the Congress. He later defected to the BJP in 2019 and has had a running feud with Deputy Chief Minister D.K. Shivakumar and has accused Mr. Shivakumar of targeting him even in the "sex CD scandal", in which Mr. Jarkiholi got a clean chit from the police.

Ramesh Jarkiholi

Case pertains to a host of business loans, for Jarkiholi's Gokak-based sugar factory Soubhagya Lakshmi Sugars Ltd., taken from 2013 to 2017

In his complaint to the police, Mr. Rajanna said that Mr. Jarkiholi, who was Chairman and Managing Director of Soubhagya Lakshmi Sugars Limited in Gokak, and two of its directors identified as Vasanth V. Patil and Shankar A. Powade applied to the bank and got business loans totaling ₹232.88 crore between July 12, 2013 and August 31, 2017 from the Karnataka State Cooperative Apex Bank and other banks in its network, including district cooperative banks in Vijayapura, Tumakuru, Dakshina Kannada and Uttara Kannada.

The complainant alleged that the loans were not repaid and as of August 31, 2023 the total outstanding was ₹439.7 crore.

Mr. Rajanna said the bank had clearly laid down conditions that before the loans were cleared, the company cannot make changes to its board without the permission of the banks.

Conspiracy alleged

However, the complaint alleged that in a conspiracy to cheat the bank and avoid repayment of the loan, the three accused have relinquished their positions in the company and made unconnected individuals directors of the company, without the knowledge of the bank.

Nine arrested on charge of assaulting cousins in Belagavi

The Hindu Bureau
BELAGAVI

The Belagavi police arrested nine of the 17 persons accused of assaulting a man and a woman in the city on Saturday.

The mob was under the wrong impression that the two were in an inter-faith relationship. However, it turned out that they are brother and sister, related to inter-faith couples. The girl happens to be the daughter of the boy's aunt, who is married to a man of another faith.

On Saturday, the mob waylaid the man, 23, and the woman, 22, who were sitting on the Fort Lake Tankbed and talking.

The man belongs to the Lambani community and the girl is a Muslim.

The mob suspected that they were in an inter-faith relationship. It forcibly took them to a room near the lake and beat them up.

The attackers did not listen to the pleas from the man that they were not in a relationship.

Police alerted

Finally, the man managed to call his parents who launched a search for them and also alerted the police. The police used a triangulation tool and traced the location of the man.

The police rescued them and took them to hospital.

The man and the woman have suffered injuries and are now being treated at the district hospital.

BJP leader and former Deputy Chief Minister K.S. Eshwarappa visited them on Sunday and demanded justice in this case.

"It is unfortunate that goondas attacked the two innocent youth who were brother and sister and the police are taking it easy. No Minister or politician has come to visit the two in the hospital nor offered them moral support. The State government should prove its secular credentials by arresting all those who are accused of this offence," he said.

Deputy Commissioner Rohan Jagadish told journalists in Belagavi on Sunday that investigators are studying CCTV footage and other clues and would soon arrest the other accused. He said that two of the arrested are minors in conflict with the law.

The arrested include Umar Sadiq, Saif Ali, Mohammad, Atif, Aman, Rihan and Azan.

2.75 tmcft of Krishna water to be released for chilli crop

The Hindu Bureau
BENGALURU

The State government on Sunday decided to release 2.75 tmcft water from Almatti and Narayanpur reservoirs to save chilli crop in the Upper Krishna basin.

"Water will be released immediately. Water has to flow 75 km and is expected to reach in two or three days," Deputy Chief Minister D.K. Shivakumar told presspersons here on Sunday.

He said that a meeting was held with district incharge Ministers and legislators of Kalaburagi, Raichur, Bagalkot, Yadgir districts.

"They explained the situation and urged the water to be released. Despite government's request not to raise crops in severe drought conditions, some farmers have cultivated chilli instead of paddy. If this crop is destroyed, the estimated loss will be around ₹2,000 crore."

Mr. Shivakumar, who holds the Water Resources portfolio, said: "To protect our farmers, we have decided to release 2.75 tmcft of water for one last time. Protesting farmers and legislators should now ensure that the water should be used only for chilli crops. We have released the water hoping that the farmers will utilise the water in a responsible manner," he said.

The Lal Bahadur Shastri reservoir at Almatti. FILE PHOTO

"Earlier we had protected Mandya farmers. Later when there was an issue with Bhadra water, we had resolved that problem too. Now the chilli growers in the Upper Krishna basin are also being protected. No water will be released for agricultural purposes," he said.

When asked about the water storage situation, he said: "Almatti and Narayanpur dams together have 47 tmcft of water. About 37 tmcft of water is needed for drinking water and 3 tmcft for other purposes. 1.5 tmcft of water will be lost during water flow. Now we have decided to release 2.75 tmcft water due to the demand from this region."

He said that the responsibility of monitoring water usage will be with people's representatives and farmers' organisations. "You have to make good use of water. We have also instructed our officials," he said.

On the proposal over river-linking proposal, Mr. Shivakumar said: "This is a Central government project. This is a big project, and we should not deviate from the issue we are facing now. A team of 31 parliamentarians from Centre is coming to inspect Cauvery today and tomorrow. Our irrigation problems will also be discussed."

HDK says he will meet Sumalatha if needed

Union Minister for Agriculture and Tribal Affairs Arjun Munda with JD(S) leaders H.D. Deve Gowda H.D. Kumaraswamy in Bengaluru on Sunday. SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

The Hindu Bureau
BENGALURU

Former Chief Minister H.D. Kumaraswamy on Sunday said that he will meet Sumalatha Ambareesh, Mandya MP, if needed.

Speaking to reporters here, he said that there was nothing wrong in meeting the Mandya MP in case she is set to continue in BJP. "We have not been specific about the constituencies that we are planning to contest. We have not said we will contest from any constituency. There has been no discussion on seat sharing. The seat sharing agreement is in initial stage," he told reporters here on Sunday after meeting Union Minister for Agriculture and Tribal Affairs Arjun Munda at the residence of former Prime Minister H.D. Deve Gowda.

He said that Chief Minister Siddaramaiah and Deputy Chief Minister D.K. Shivakumar were interested in destroying Janata Dal (Secular). Both have a common agenda to finish off JD (S), and added that they were trying to convince JD (S) legislators to quit the party.

War of words between JD(S) and Congress continues

The Hindu Bureau
BENGALURU

This comes after former Prime Minister H.D. Deve Gowda said that his party is partnering with the BJP to 'end the Congress era' in Karnataka

The war of words between the Congress and the Janata Dal (Secular) leaders after the outbursts of former Prime Minister H.D. Deve Gowda over the end of the Congress continued on Sunday too.

The JD(S) accused Chief Minister Siddaramaiah of being "arrogant" for stating that he would consider the curse of Mr. Gowda as a blessing.

"Mr. Gowda has never cursed anyone. He has been blessing all always. Have you forgotten the blessing that you [Mr. Siddaramaiah] received from him after you lost to Guruswamy [in 1999]," the JD(S) said in a statement, adding "If Mr. Gowda had mn not blessed and come to your rescue, could you grow so much in politics?"

Stating that the JD(S) has tied up with the BJP to bring to an end to the era of the Congress in the State, Mr. Gowda had attacked Mr. Siddaramaiah and Deputy Chief Minister D.K. Shivakumar on earlier. In response, Mr. Siddaramaiah had said that the seniors should not curse, but bless, juniors.

"He (Mr. Gowda) must be speaking in desperation as he had to compromise his secular credentials that he claimed to have throughout his career by aligning with BJP. No one should seek the destruction of another political party," the Chief Minister had said.

On Sunday, the regional party accused the Chief Minister of being arrogant and had spoken light of Mr. Gowda. "What Mr. Gowda spoke was not any figment of imagination, but a fact. The Congress under the leadership of Mr. Siddaramaiah and Mr. Shivakumar will come to an end. The Congress that wants to end democracy by dividing society is gasping for breath."

Hitting back at the Chief Minister, the JD(S) said that it hoped that the political twilight years of Mr. Siddaramaiah should be happy, and that he should not indulge in anything that could hurt him. "The mask of secularism will come out if one goes into the depths of the Chief Minister's office. You [Mr. Siddaramaiah] would not have grown so much if Mr. Gowda had not followed principles of secularism and social justice, " it said.

The party also accused the Chief Minister of trying to break the JD(S).

"What Mr. Gowda had asked was to take over excess land in Bangalore Mysore Infrastructure Corridor project. What is stopping you from doing that ? You are digressing from the point."

BJP launches *manthrakshate* campaign

The Hindu Bureau
BENGALURU

The Bharatiya Janata Party State unit on Sunday launched a campaign titled "Mane Manege Manthrakshate" as a prelude to the inauguration of Ram Mandir in Ayodhya.

Veteran BJP leader B.S. Yediyurappa and BJP State president B.Y. Vijayendra participated in the campaign in Bengaluru while various other leaders, including Union Minister Shobha Karandlaje, took part in the campaign in different districts.

Under the campaign, the BJP leaders are trying to build a tempo for the inauguration of the Ram Mandir.

Mr. Vijayendra, who carried out the campaign in Seshadripuram in Bengaluru, told mediapersons that the party would try to reach all the houses in the State under the campaign.

Scenic

Trekkers enjoying the sunrise amidst cloudy weather on top of the Sri Muthuraya Swami Betta off Kanakapura Road, near Bengaluru. K. MURALI KUMAR

CORRIDORS OF POWER

All hail 'son of Kempe Gowda'

The party lines were quite blurry last week as the MLAs from different parties came together to redress the grievances of citizens from three constituencies -- Yelahanka, Byatarayanapura and Dasarahalli -- as a part of Deputy Chief Minister D.K. Shivakumar's *(in picture)* "Government at your doorstep" campaign. Yelahanka MLA S.R. Vishwanath and Dasarahalli MLA S. Muniraju, both from the BJP, did not shy away from heaping praise on Mr. Shivakumar, who is also Minister for Bengaluru Development.

In his speech, after mentioning that the founder of Bengaluru, Kempe Gowda, was from Yelahanka, Mr. Vishwanath called Shivakumar as "putra (son) of Kempe Gowda." It seems the former BDA chairman indulged in clever wordplay, since Mr. Shivakumar's father's name is also Kempe Gowda. That is what the "K" in his initials stands for.

Mr. Vishwanath further said that while it was not an easy task to manage a city with a population of 1.4 crore, Mr. Shivakumar was doing it with relative ease. He also said that he had picked up quite a few qualities, especially determination, from the Deputy Chief Minister.

Not to be left behind, Mr. Muniraju also said that unmindful of what happened during the previous government, the Opposition MLAs will cooperate with Mr. Shivakumar for the development of Bengaluru. "He (DKS) has the will, courage and capacity to carry on development," he gushed.

The power hangover

Minister for School Education Madhu Bangarappa *(in picture)*, at a press conference in Shivamogga, said that former Chief Minister B.S. Yediyurappa and his two sons, B.Y. Raghavendra, Lok Sabha member, and

B.Y. Vijayendra, MLA and State BJP president, were still under the impression that their party was in power in Karnataka.

He said that whenever an official of Shikaripur is transferred, the former Chief Minister's family members contact Chief Minister Siddaramaiah and request him for cancellation of the transfer. "It seems they have not realised that the Congress has come to power in the State," he said.

Further, the Minister narrated that he recommended the transfer of certain officials from the district who had stayed in one post for too long. "For administrative purposes, those transfers were required," he said.

Many Congress leaders in Shivamogga have often shared with the media that the former Chief Minister and his family members enjoy major clout when it came to the affairs of Shikaripur constituency, which Mr. Yediyurappa represented all through his political career. In the early days of the Congress government, some transfers of officials in Shikaripur were cancelled, reportedly due to the intervention of his family members.

Jahnavi T.R.
Sathish G.T.

KSDL to build office space for government departments

The Hindu Bureau
BENGALURU

MSIL to follow Kerala model in chit fund business

The State government is planning to build a well-equipped office to house various departments on the premises of Karnataka Soaps and Detergents Ltd. (KSDL) in Yeshwantpur.

M.B. Patil, Large and Medium-scale Industries Minister and also chairman of KSDL, said available land on the KSDL premises would be utilised to construct an office complex for government departments in a phased manner. However, this would be done after considering the space required for KSDL's future expansion and growth.

Mr. Patil said KSDL has a mandate to grow its annual business transactions to ₹2,500 crore by 2025 and ₹5,000 crore by 2030 from the current turnover of ₹1,200 crore.

"Our priority and immediate focus is to expand foreign market presence for KSDL products and exports to predominantly to Europe and Arab countries,'' he said.

On KDSL's diversification, the Minister said the company's product portfolio would be expanded soon by launching groceries, handwashes, etc.

The chit fund business of Mysore Sales International Ltd. (MSIL) will get a fillip as the State government plans to expand and grow this business in lines with similar business in Kerala, said Mr. Patil.

Expansion

"We have decided to diversify and expand MSIL's chit fund business taking inspiration from the model that exists in Kerala. Our aim is to achieve annual transactions worth ₹10,000 crore through chit funding. Women self-help groups will be actively involved in this venture," he said.

Mr. Patil also said State PSUs would be given a corporate image to make them more competitive and profitable.

'Indians need to learn to use the power Ambedkar gave through the Constitution'

Delivering the U.R. Ananthamurthy Memorial Lecture at BIC, activist Aruna Roy said that the idea of India as a pluralistic society was changing and a monoculturalism antithetical to it was growing

Shilpa Elizabeth
BENGALURU

A file photo of women workers returning to their village after digging a tank at Maradevanahalli village under the MGNREGA scheme.

From the new year of 2024, the government's mandate that all wages under the Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee ACT (MGNREGA) scheme must be paid through Aadhaar-based payment system came into effect. This drew a lot of flak from activists and workers' organisations who felt that the move could end up denying access to the marginalised classes, pushing them to abject poverty.

"People don't fully understand the relationship between MGNREGA and a government at the Centre which is destroying it... When you come down to the grassroots many people who are in need of MGNREGA have voted for BJP, because they don't live in the duality of Constitutional morality and traditional morality that we exist in," said Aruna Roy, activist, former civil servant and founder of Mazdoor Kisan Shakti Sangathan.

She was speaking at the annual U.R. Ananthamurthy Memorial Lecture at the Bangalore International Centre.

"They don't see one from the other at certain points of time. They voted for BJP and now many of them in Rajasthan face a problem because MGNREGA is shrinking."

"And they don't know how to address the problem today," said Ms. Roy whose works mostly focus on working-class issues in Rajasthan.

The problem of duality

Ms. Roy spoke at length about the dichotomy created by the duality in which Indians exist and how we have grown up with two different kinds of moral authorities, the first of them being constitutional principles. "I grew up with the knowledge of how important the Constitution was in taking India to the post-freedom era. My father always said that Gandhi was important in getting us independence, but without Ambedkar, there would have been no modern India or a structure through which we could have fought for equality, liberty and fraternity, and the dignity of the individual," she said. But on the other side, we have been living with superstitions, dowry demands, and many other social evils, she pointed out.

Aruna Roy. BHAGYA PRAKASH K.

"We never questioned the stranglehold traditional culture had on many people and we did not try to understand our own predicament of switching from one to the other -- not fully understanding, not fully accepting, not fully in consonance with it but still part of it. Many traditions have run this country. We have allowed ourselves to be painted into a corner and we must resist this position now," she said.

Aruna Roy speaking at the event. BHAGYA PRAKASH K.

Dealing with power

Ms. Roy pointed out that although Dr. Ambedkar drafted a Constitution that allowed people to use its provisions to achieve their demands, not many have learned how to do it. She noted that the idea of India as a pluralistic society was changing and a monocultural rationalism antithetical to it was growing.

"Dr. Ambedkar wrote that we should not be contented with mere political democracy. He said we must make our political democracy a social democracy and political democracy cannot last unless there lies at its base social democracy," she said reading out from Dr. Ambedkar's writings.

Speaking about the complexity of Indian polity, Ms. Roy said, "Western Rajasthan voted according to religion, whereas eastern Rajasthan voted for caste. For you and me it would make no difference whether it is a caste vote or a religious vote. But politically it makes a lot of difference. We need to look at such details which we haven't."

"Indian polity is as complex and as culturally different as all the other cultural things in India that we take for granted. We have not developed a technique, a technology and an understanding of what makes people what they are in terms of faith," she added.

Ms. Roy also held the middle class partly responsible for the state of affairs in the country today. The middle class has a politics of convenience and comfort and is compromised heavily due to people's dependence on technology and the benefits from the state, she said.

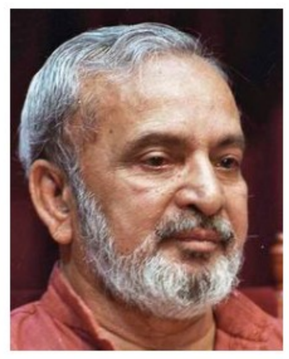
Role of middle class

"Today the want of convenience and comfort has taken over. People are dependent on technologies, but on the other side the government is using more and more technologies for surveillance. Our people are buying the myth that we are extremely well off when the government gives a mere ₹200 as old age pension in this country. It is a shame," she criticised.

Unless we get social justice, social development and welfare schemes, a large section of people who want to fight to get India to a better place will not be able to do it, she argued.

"We have to see that the battles for freedom of articulation are not just for us, but for the freedom of expression of the common person who can't get daily rations. We have to evolve a polity which will bring it all together and link it together."

"Democratic engagement with power has to be unpacked. We have to use the system, and question the system - how do you pass three laws that I don't agree with, in my name? How do you pass a set of new criminal laws without public debate? But we haven't asked that question. We are not using the power we have," she said, pointing out the need for educating people on how to work democracy, do collective bargaining and use the existing laws to achieve public demand.



Remembering U.R.Ananthamurthy

In 2014, Jnanpith Award winner U. R. Ananthamurthy commented that he would leave the country if Narendra Modi became the prime minister. The comment made him a target of right-wing hatred.

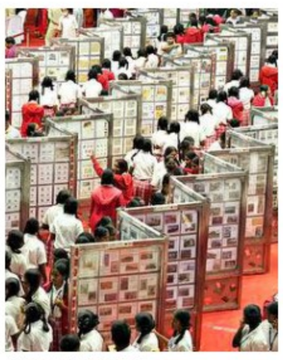
"I met Mr. Ananthamurthy shortly after he had been issued a ticket to Pakistan by supporters of the BJP," recalled Ms. Roy. "A remarkable human being, who was a writer, a cultural person in the best definition of the term, who understood politics, literature, the condition of people, who understood that the division between various categories in life is thin indeed; That you don't have to dislike Ramana because you like Gandhi or you don't have to dislike Gandhi because you like Marx," she said.

Ms. Roynoted that the best way to remember Mr. Ananthamurthy is by reading his books.

She said, "In *Hindutva or Hind Swaraj,* Prof. Ananthamurthy compares Savarkar and Gandhi and talks about Savarkar's desire for nationhood, his desire to wield power. Gandhi, on the other hand, is inward-looking and deals with morality. We need Gandhi. We don't need Savarkar, but we have to learn how to deal with the power that Dr. Ambedkar gave us through the Constitution."

Philatelists take centre stage at KARNAPEX 2024

Surabhi Gorebal and Rishabh Sachdeva
BENGALURU



KARNAPEX 2024. K. MURALI KUMAR

KARNAPEX 2024, which took place in Bengaluru's Sree Kanteerava Indoor Stadium between the 5th and 8th of January, showcased the cultural richness and historical splendour of stamps. This 13th state-level philatelic exhibition immersed stamp enthusiasts, offering more than 690 frames filled with stamps that paid tribute to Karnataka's diverse heritage.

Other event highlights included an open art area featuring hand-painted tattoos, caricatures, portraits, and a postcard workshop. Stalls were also set up by organisations such as NIMHANS and ISRO. Additionally, five special covers, which highlighted the state's cultural richness and iconic people, including one featuring the late Puneeth Rajkumar, were also released at the event.

The session was inaugurated by Shri P.C. Mohan, Member of Parliament from the Bengaluru Central Constituency. In his opening address, he remarked, "Over the years, the means of communication have evolved significantly with the ascent of social media. However, the sentiments associated with letters and postcards continue to hold a special place, and the distinctive stamps serve as windows into a myriad of different experiences."

Philatelists took centre stage, transforming the venue into a haven for rare stamp enthusiasts. The crowd, a mix of seasoned collectors, school students and curious newcomers, eagerly explored the stalls, their eyes lighting up with every discovery.

Joseph D'Coutho, a philatelist from Cochin, was one of them.

He said, "Every stall unveils a diverse array of collections featuring stamps and coins from around the globe. Exhibitions like these provide us with a valuable platform to showcase our cherished collections."

The greatest bad writer America has produced

A recent study has found that our enjoyment of detective stories depends on our self- esteem

ABOUT 500 WORDS

Suresh Menon

Harry Stephen Keeler was a pulp novelist who was so bad that he was good. GETTY IMAGES

When something is really bad - a book, a movie, a painting, a joke, it is, in fact, really good. Perhaps that is why some of our actors and writers are as successful as they are. People love to check out what fresh depths they might have plumbed.

Harry Stephen Keeler was a pulp novelist who was so bad that he was good. As a writer of detective fiction, the only thing he had in common with Agatha Christie was the year of birth, 1890. His plots were ridiculous, the denouement pathetic, and his characters had strange names and spoke in strange dialects. Years after his death, however, Keeler became a cult figure with fan clubs and websites devoted to him.

The popular novelist Neil Gaiman said of him, "My guiltiest pleasure is Harry Stephen Keeler. He may have been the greatest bad writer America has ever produced. There are few faults you can accuse him of that he is not guilty of. But I love him."

In 1936, Keeler wrote *X Jones of Scotland Yard* where a man is found strangled in the middle of a lawn. There are no footprints other than his own. The suspect is the 'Flying Strangler Baby', a killer midget who disguises himself as a baby and stalks his victims by a helicopter. That gives you the flavour of his work. The book is also notable for mentioning the guilty party for the first time in the last sentence of the 448-page book.

At some point in some of the books, the reader would come across a page which said, "STOP! At this point all the characters have been presented. It should now be possible for you to solve the mystery... CAN YOU DO IT?"

Would you be intimidated by such a question? A recent study has found that our enjoyment of detective stories depends on our self- esteem. The less confident we are, the better we like it when the murderer is revealed to have been exactly whom we suspected all along, and vice-versa.

Or as the study put it, "A resolution that confirmed respondents' suspicion was disliked by persons with high self-esteem, whereas respondents with low self-esteem disliked a surprising resolution."

Guessing correctly, it says, is a 'little self-esteem boost', so valuable to so many of us. There is a similarity with understanding a joke, perhaps.

Keeler's technique was unique. He wrote a manuscript, twice or thrice the size required, and then cut it down removing some subplots. The cut portions (he called these 'chunks') would then go into the next book which would go through a similar cutting procedure and provide more chunks. The book *Thieves' Nights* has a hero reading a book about two other men telling stories, detailed at some length.

The critic Anthony Boucher, a loyal Keelerite, probably summed it up best: "His fabulous fertility could make Keeler the greatest writer in the business - if only he could write."

You could say that of so many of our successful writers!

FROM THE ARCHIVES
The Hindu.

FIFTY YEARS AGO JANUARY 8, 1974

Urs Asks Those Who Fled State to Return

Bangalore, Jan. 7: The Chief Minister, Mr. D. Devaraj Urs, appealed to-day to those who have fled to Maharashtra during the recent disturbances in connection with the Karnataka Maharashtra border agitation to return to the State.

He assured them that "the Government and the people will fully co-operate with all those who have come for stay in the State, a place known for peaceful co-existence."

The Chief Minister said during the recent border disturbances it was natural that the people of the State reacted to "certain atrocities" committed in Maharashtra.

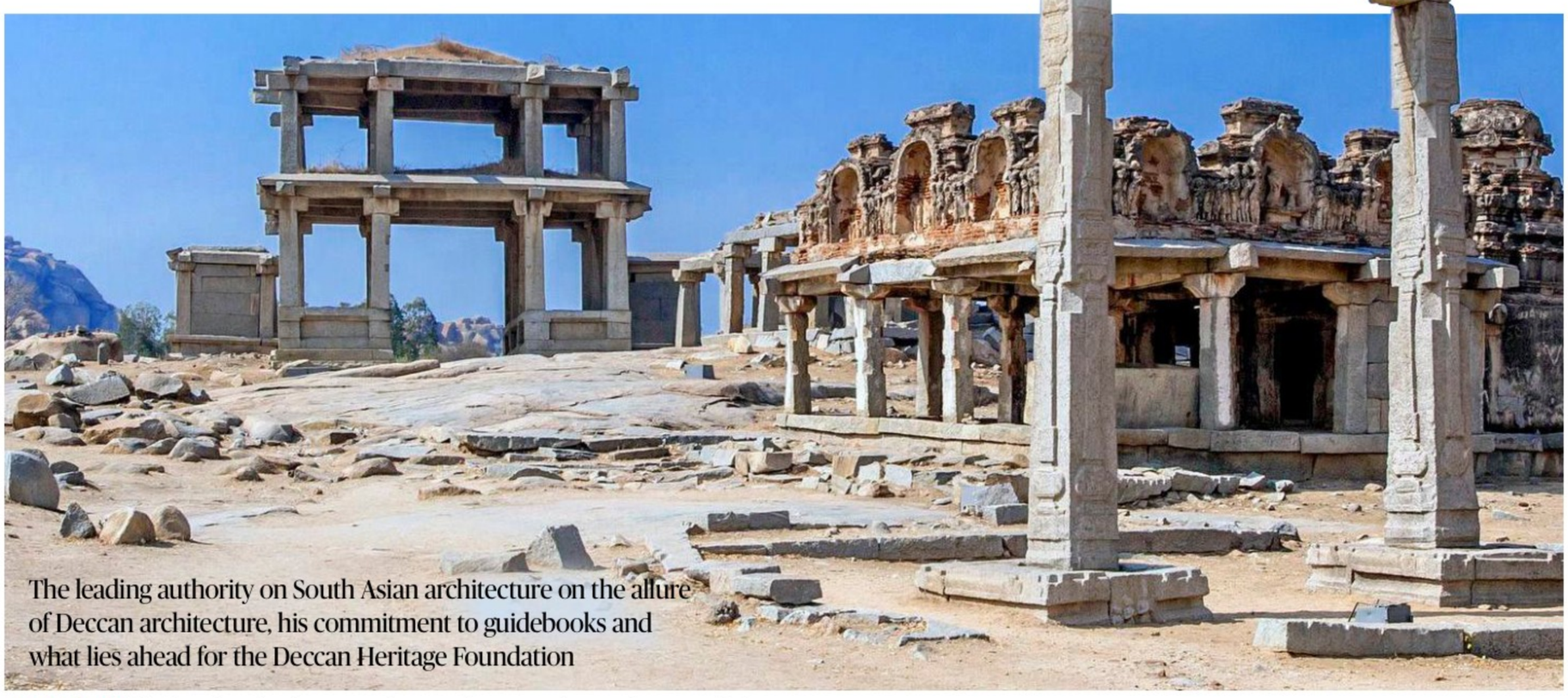
Industrialists Urged to Help Job Scheme

Bangalore, Jan. 7: The Karnataka Government today issued an appeal to the industrialists in the State to involve themselves in the 'half millions jobs' programme and entertain candidates who had training in the industrial training institutes.

Subsidised employment scheme for ITI Certificate holders is one of the schemes launched by the State Government under the "Half million jobs programme."

The scheme envisages the placement of ITI candidates in the various industries and establishments against suitable posts for one year on a monthly pay of Rs. 150 of which 50 per cent is subsidised by the Government and the remaining 50 per cent by the respective establishments.

George Michell: 'The Deccan has been under-appreciated'



The leading authority on South Asian architecture on the allure of Deccan architecture, his commitment to guidebooks and what lies ahead for the Deccan Heritage Foundation

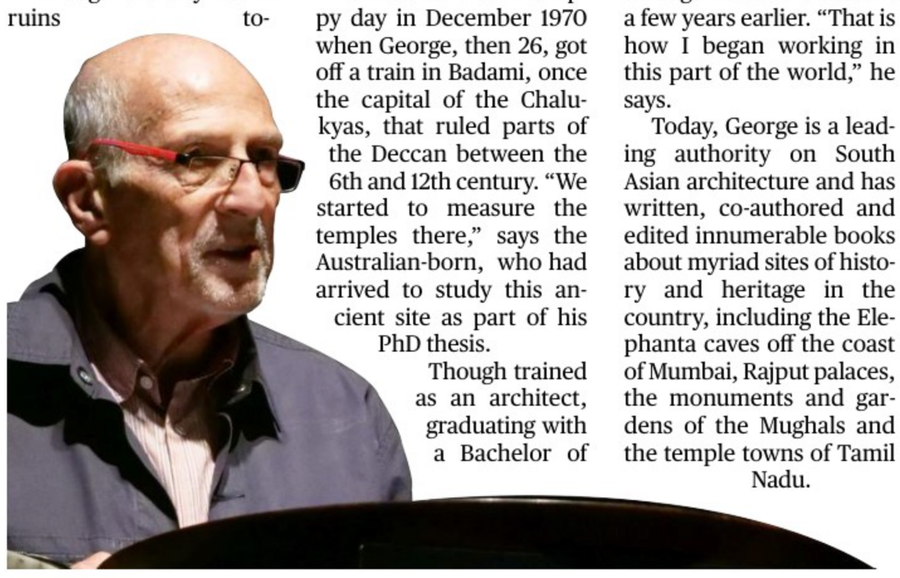
No more in ruin (Clockwise from above) Hampi, Keshava temple in Somnathpura and George Michell. SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

Preeti Zahacariah

George Michell smiles when I bring up *Victory City*, Salman Rushdie's marvellously irreverent novel about the mythical kingdom of Bisnaga. What does he think of Rushdie's adroit retelling of the rise and fall of the Vijayanagara Empire? "It is fun...very wicked," he says, pointing out that many of the characters who are part of the kingdom's lore and history, including Krishna Deva Raya, the king, and Pampa, the goddess, are part of the book, albeit, represented in a fantastical way.

One thing, however, is the unvarnished truth. "Vijayanagar *means* Victory City," he says of this medieval imperial power, whose architecture he has been studying and documenting for over three decades. A name that appears to be more than justified, going by most narratives, including the first-person accounts of foreign travellers such as Ibn Batuta, Domingo Paes and Fernao Nuniz. "It was one of the great Hindu empires in India," agrees George, co-founder of the Deccan Heritage Foundation, who was recently in Bengaluru to deliver a lecture on the city plan of Hampi, thecapitalof the Vijayanagara empire at the Bangalore International Centre (BIC) in Domlur.

Though the city lies in ruins today, abandoned after being destroyed in 1565 after the Battle of Talikota, it is also a time capsule, teleporting a visitor into this lost world. "One reason to study the Hampi site is that it was left, unlike Delhi or Hyderabad, which were rebuilt after being destroyed," he says. "Everything you see there was built before 1565 and has not been altered in later times, which means it is an ideal place to study."



The heritage of the Deccan

It must have been a nippy day in December 1970 when George, then 26, got off a train in Badami, once the capital of the Chalukyas, that ruled parts of the Deccan between the 6th and 12th century. "We started to measure the temples there," says the Australian-born, who had arrived to study this ancient site as part of his PhD thesis.

Though trained as an architect, graduating with a Bachelor of Architecture degree from The University of Melbourne in 1968, he did not enjoy working as one, he says. Instead, he found himself interested in working with ancient Indian architecture. So, he left Melbourne and went to London to earn a PhD at the School of Oriental and African Studies (SOAS). "To do a PhD, you have to pick a topic, so I thought about the temples around Badami," said George, who had first seen these temples when he backpacked through India as a student a few years earlier. "That is how I began working in this part of the world," he says.

Today, George is a leading authority on South Asian architecture and has written, co-authored and edited innumerable books about myriad sites of history and heritage in the country, including the Elephanta caves off the coast of Mumbai, Rajput palaces, the monuments and gardens of the Mughals and the temple towns of Tamil Nadu.

The diverse architectural traditions of the Deccan Plateau, encompassing parts of Karnataka, Maharashtra, Telangana, Andhra Pradesh and Goa, is another thing that he has repeatedly written about. Since the Deccan is located between the North and the South, influences from both segue into it, says George, adding that the rocky terrain also allows access to "wonderful" materials like sandstone and granite. However, "It has also been underappreciated," he says, recalling how when he began work in Hampi with the American archaeologist John Fritz in 1981, they had to camp amidst the ruins because there was nowhere to stay. "People didn't go there. I remember them saying that it is not important."

And yet, as we now know, the city, which was declared a World Heritage Site by UNESCO in 1986, is full of architectural wonders, just like many other pockets of the Deccan Plateau, home to around 11 such sites.

The Deccan Heritage Foundation

In 2011, George and architectural historian Helen Philon founded the Deccan Heritage Foundation with Stephane Bloch Saloz as co-founder. "We always felt we should do something for the conservation of little-known aspects of Deccan," he says of the organisation, whose website states that the foundation partners with experts and local residents to "protect, restore and promote the heritage of this rich region of South India through active architectural conservation projects that are socially minded and benefit those who live amongst them."

Pages of Information

A vital function of the foundation, an aspect George is keenly involved in, is the publication of various informative books about the region. "We feel very committed to the guidebook," he says with a laugh. According to him, these small, modestly-priced and attractively-produced books are useful for people to learn and discover more about the places they visit. "It is often difficult to get a good guide there. This way, they can read the book and go around and see things," he says of the books available in print and e-book format today.

The Deccan Heritage Foundation also conducts talks and tours of the region and is even in talks with Digitour, an app that provides an immersive audiovisual guided tour exclusively of heritage monuments. "We are trying to work out how to collaborate with them," says George, who believes that the general interest in history and heritage, especially among young people, has been steadily growing.

Over the years, the foundation has been instrumental in restoring multiple heritage sites in the Deccan, including the Qanat/Karez water system of Bidar, the Sadar Sofa, Khwaja Bande Nawaz Dargah in Gulbarga and the architectural model of the former British Residency in Hyderabad. DHF's most recently completed project was the restoration of the 16th century Gagan Mahal pavilion, Anegundi, from the Vijayanagara period, part of the Government of Karnataka's 'Adopt a Monument' scheme.

In the pipeline

According to DHF's chairperson, Ambassador Latha Reddy, who was felicitated for this effort by the Chief Minister at a recent function in Bengaluru, the next major project in Karnataka is the restoration of the historic Jayalakshmi Vilas Mansion in Mysuru. They are also working on a couple of projects in Hyderabad, continuing to grow their documentation and archival centre, and creating more educational books, the latest of which is a new guidebook on Mysuru and Srirangapatna, which will be launched in the city this month.

George believes that their work has made a difference.

"The word 'Deccan' has a different meaning today than what it was when we started," he says. "We now understand that it is a special part of India and a tradition that is worth learning about."

A panel discussion with the authors of the Mysuru and Srirangapatna guidebook, Dr George Michell, Malavika Murthy, Caleb Simmons and Shivendra Urs will be held at 6.30pm at the Museum of Art & Photography (MAP), Bengaluru, on January 17.

There will also be a book launch and illustrated talk by Michellon January 18, 6.30pm at the Bangalore International Centre

When a fire burns within brightly

Shilpa Anandraj

Sahadev Khelvadi, who co-produced the critically acclaimed 2019 film, *Gantumoote*, is making his debut as a director with *Kenda*. Written and directed by Sahadev, *Kenda*, meaning burning coal, is produced by Roopa Rao, the director of *Gantumoote*. Sahadev also dons the role of a cinematographer for *Kenda*.

The 35-year-old director, who speaks to us from his studio in JP Nagar, says the film is a socio-political satire on disorganised crime. "It follows the journey of a group of unemployed youth, who have no goals and how they are pulled into a whirlpool of crime. The film explores the triumphs and lows of the protagonist, who works in a factory and eventually ends up on the wrong side of the law."

The film, Sahadev says, is also a character study in a politically-charged environment of friendships and betrayals." Talking of the title of the film, Sahadev says, "Everyone has some burning issue deep within themselves. All it takes is a slight kindling and chances are it will explode. Hence we chose the title Kenda, which symbolises the burning coals beneath the ash."

Kenda is his second venture in films. "Before my foray into films, like any good South Indian boy, I studied engineering." Once he completed his studies, he went to NYU Tisch School of Arts to study film making. "It was there that I made a short film with a similar story and title as *Kenda*. We can say *Kenda* is inspired from my thesis script during my university days in New York," say

In action Sahadev on the sets of the film and (left) a still from the film. SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

Sahadev lived in the US from 2007 to 2017. He worked as an interim professor at the same university where he was studying, teaching cinematography. "I decided to return to India and teamed up with my friend, Roopa Rao to make *Gantumoote*."

Sahadev was the cinematographer for this film, which was produced under the banner of his and Roopa's company – Ameyukti Studios. *Kenda* will also be released under the same banner, confirms the director, who says they started a production house to make films they wanted to make.

Kenda which will be released after Republic Day, is in the post-production stage.

The challenges, as a writer, director, cinematographer, Sahadev says, have been positive, ones. The entire cast and crew are newcomers. Ritwick Kaikini, son of author and lyricist Jayant Kaikini makes his debut as a music composer with *Kenda*. Despite the title, Sahadev says *Kenda* is not a violent film.

"How a film is made or action depicted on screen rests solely with the director. Films are normally made keeping in mind what the audience wants. I speak for myself when I say machismo and violence needs to be spoken about on screen. The audio-visual medium is so powerful that certain things shown on screen can have an impact on the viewer. It depends on how the writer/director visualises and puts it across cinematically."

Violence has always been used to describe a certain form of masculinity. Masculinity can be shown in other ways too, which is what we will see in the coming years in cinema." Cinema is literature, art and a combination of many things, says Sahadev. "After *Kenda*, I would like to create a web-series in Kannada based on my lived experiences in India and the US."

CITYBEATS

Once upon a time...

ON TILL JANUARY 25
Ranga Shankara's Little Cloud 2024, a storytelling time for children is on. The storytelling sessions are open to children in the age group of four to six. The event will be on every Saturday and Sunday in multiple languages by multiple artistes. *Tickets at Ranga Shankara Box Office and BookMyShow.*

Stamped!

ONGOING
Karnapex 2024, the 13th Karnataka State Level Philately Exhibition (an exhibition of stamps) is on. There are there are 600 frames of exhibits and the event will also include quiz on philately, cultural activities and more.
At Shree Kanteerava Indoor Stadium, till January 8, 10am to 5pm

Sankranti oota

Oota Bangalore will serve you Sankranti special with an vegetarian thali. The food, curated by chef Dinesh Poojary, will serve traditional fare laden with *ellu* (white sesame seeds), *bella* (jaggery) and *cobri* (dry coconut), fried groundnuts and more.
Call 8880233322 to book your table.

Telangana Congress continues push for fielding Sonia in Lok Sabha polls

The State unit of the party has identified Nalgonda and Khammam constituencies, saying she can win these seats hands down; its Executive Committee meeting recently unanimously adopted a resolution urging her to contest from the State

R. Ravikanth Reddy
HYDERABAD

After Indira Gandhi, another member of the Gandhi family may contest from a constituency in the State in the Lok Sabha election if the Telangana Pradesh Congress Committee's desire to impress upon former party president Sonia Gandhi to do so fructifies.

Chief Minister A. Revanth Reddy and senior Ministers have finalised two constituencies – Nalgonda and Khammam – from where she could be fielded and where she would win hands down. "There is no seat in Telangana where Sonia Gandhi cannot win for the kind of emotional bond she shares with Telangana," says Minister for Irrigation N. Uttam Kumar Reddy.

Sonia Gandhi with Telangana CM A. Revanth Reddy.

The reason is that Telangana society considers that a separate Telangana would not have been a reality without her decision, party leaders say.

In fact, former Chief Minister K. Chandrashekhar Rao too admitted on the floor of the Assembly that without Ms. Sonia Gandhi's initiative, carving out Telangana from Andhra Pradesh would not have been possible.

Precisely, this is the reason the Telangana Congress wants her to contest in 2024, in perhaps what could be her last competitive election. It wants to repay the gratitude on behalf of Telangana people for what she did to make the 60-year-old dream for a separate State come true against all odds, Mr. Revanth Reddy argued in the recently held Congress Executive Committee meeting that unanimously adopted a resolution asking her to contest from Telangana.

Sources said Ms. Sonia has not totally rejected the suggestion of the Congress leaders, but it would be another emotional moment for her to leave the Rai Bareli seat that she represents and come to Telangana. A leader admitted that the party may opt for Priyanka Gandhi if Ms. Sonia Gandhi is unwilling to accept the request.

The other options are Mahabubnagar where the Congress has swept the Assembly polls. Medak could be another blinder for Ms. Sonia from where her mother-in-law and former Prime Minister Indira Gandhi was elected in the most difficult times of her political career.

YSRCP, BJP are in illicit relationship, says Congress

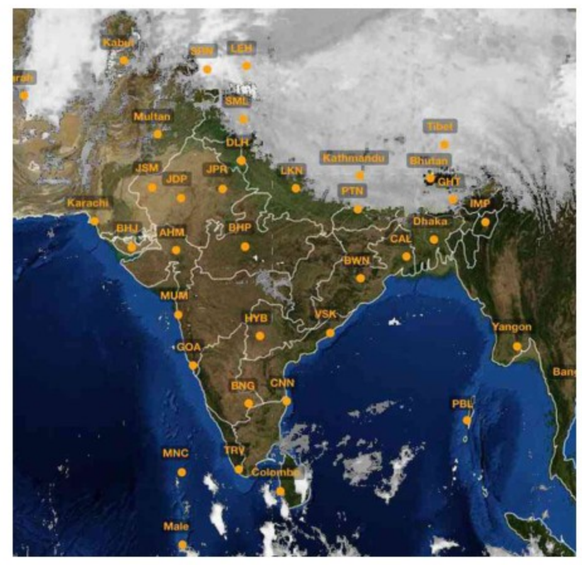
The Hindu Bureau
VIJAYAWADA

The Congress's Andhra Pradesh in-charge, Manickam Tagore, on Sunday alleged that the YSR Congress Party (YSRCP) and the BJP were in an "illicit relationship".

In a post on 'X', Mr. Tagore said the Congresswas engaged in a fight against the BJP, with zero tolerance towards the "communal hatred spread by it." In the State, he said the party was pitted against the TDP and Jana Sena, which were partners of the BJP. "We will fight against all the four parties in the State," he said.

WEATHERWATCH

Rainfall, temperature & air quality in select metros yesterday



TEMPERATURE DATA: IMD, POLLUTION DATA: CPCB, MAP: INSAT/IMD (TAKEN AT 17.00 HRS)

Forecast for Monday: Heavy to very heavy rainfall very likely at isolated places over coastal Tamil Nadu and heavy rainfall at isolated places over Kerala and Andhra Pradesh. Dense to very dense fog very likely in some parts of Punjab and in isolated pockets of Haryana.

CITY	RAIN	MAX	MIN	CITY	RAIN	MAX	MIN
Agartala	—	25.9	13.1	Kozhikode	—	34.4	25.6
Ahmedabad	—	25.7	14.0	Kurnool	—	32.1	21.2
Aizawl	—	23.6	10.7	Lucknow	—	18.4	9.8
Allahabad	—	18.4	15.4	Madurai	2.2	31.6	23.8
Bengaluru	—	28.6	18.0	Mangaluru	—	32.4	23.5
Bhopal	—	17.5	14.1	Mumbai	—	30.4	21.8
Bhubaneswar	—	28.4	14.4	Mysuru	6.0	27.4	22.2
Chandigarh	—	16.4	8.6	New Delhi	—	17.6	6.2
Chennai	—	28.4	25.1	Patna	—	20.7	14.4
Coimbatore	—	30.0	23.0	Port Blair	—	31.7	26.7
Dehradun	—	22.6	6.3	Puducherry	19.1	26.8	23.5
Gangtok	—	14.6	6.5	Pune	—	31.6	19.0
Goa	—	33.0	—	Raipur	—	29.0	16.7
Guwahati	—	27.6	10.6	Ranchi	—	21.8	12.9
Hubballi	—	30.0	19.0	Shillong	—	16.2	7.4
Hyderabad	—	27.4	18.5	Shimla	43.0	14.8	5.3
Imphal	—	23.1	6.1	Srinagar	—	12.3	-5.6
Jaipur	—	18.0	7.8	Thiruvananthapuram	0.5	34.6	25.8
Kochi	4.0	—	24.4	Tiruchi	—	31.7	24.4
Kohima	—	17.2	5.0	Vijayawada	—	—	19.4
Kolkata	—	25.3	16.7	Visakhapatnam	—	—	21.4

(Rainfall data in mm; temperature in Celsius)

Pollutants in the air you are breathing

CITIES	SO_2	NO_2	CO	PM2.5	PM10	CODE
Ahmedabad	3	10	.36	174	118	
Bengaluru	4	.31	.45	61	102	
Chennai	.27	.45	100	86	95	
Delhi	.18	.43	186	384	333	
Hyderabad	6	.61	.53	118	—	
Kolkata	.30	9	.69	271	171	
Lucknow	6	.38	.43	297	151	
Mumbai	3	.46	.34	157	130	
Pune	.26	2	.62	103	141	
Visakhapatnam	.11	.49	.44	155	117	

Yesterday

In observation made at 4.00 p.m., Bhagalpur, Bihar recorded an overall air quality index (AQI) score of 382 indicating an unhealthy level of pollution. In contrast, Aizaw, Mizoram recorded a healthy AQI score of 26

Air Quality Code: Poor | Moderate | Good (Readings indicate average AQI)

SO_2: Sulphur Dioxide. Short-term exposure can harm the respiratory system, making breathing difficult. It can affect visibility by reacting with other air particles to form haze and stain culturally important objects such as statues and monuments.

NO_2: Nitrogen Dioxide. Aggravates respiratory illness, causes haze to form by reacting with other air particles, causes acid rain, pollutes coastal waters.

CO: Carbon monoxide. High concentration in air reduces oxygen supply to critical organs like the heart and brain. At very high levels, it can cause dizziness, confusion, unconsciousness and even death.

PM2.5 & PM10: Particulate matter pollution can cause irritation of the eyes, nose and throat, coughing, chest tightness and shortness of breath, reduced lung function, irregular heartbeat, asthma attacks, heart attacks and premature death in people with heart or lung disease

T.N. Global Investors Meet kicks off with vision report for $1 trillion economy

Sangeetha Kandavel and Sanjay Vijayakumar
CHENNAI

The Tamil Nadu Global Investors Meet (GIM) 2024 hosted by the DMK government got off to a blistering start at the Chennai Trade Centre on Sunday with Chief Minister M.K. Stalin unveiling a blueprint for making the State a $1 trillion economy by 2030. The government also released its Semiconductor and Advanced Electronics Policy 2024 on a day when a slew of memoranda of understandings (MOUs) entailing mega investments were signed.

The vision report provides a comprehensive 'Growth Framework' for achieving Mr. Stalin's ambitious target. "To achieve the target, we are pursuing a twin-pronged approach of attracting both capital and employment-intensive investments," he said inaugurating the event.

The GIM, he said, will act as a catalyst for economic and industrial growth. "The event has witnessed encouraging response and is expected to bring pride and investment to Tamil Nadu. Multiple policies have been announced by the State. Our focus is to ensure development for all," he said.

The previous two editions of the GIM were held in 2019 and 2015 under the erstwhile AIADMK regime.

Tamil Nadu Chief Minister M.K. Stalin (centre) along with Piyush Goyal, Union Minister of Commerce Industry, Consumer Affairs, Food and Public Distribution and Textiles; T.R.B. Rajaa, T.N. Minister for Industries, Investment Promotions and Commerce; Venu Srinivasan, chairman, TVS Motors; and foreign delegates, at the inauguration of the Tamil Nadu Global Investors Meet on Sunday.

Union Minister for Commerce and Industry Piyush Goyal, the chief guest on the occasion, said India's growth is backed by the success of its States and Tamil Nadu stands as a pivotal cog in the wheel. "Tamil Nadu is one of the most ambitious States with the vision of $1 trillion economy by 2030 and the Government of India is working closely with the State government towards taking the State's inclusive and sustainable growth forward," he said.

A slew of MOUs were exchanged through the day. The key among them was a pact signed by the State government with Vietnamese electric vehicle (EV) maker VinFast for setting up its plant in Thoothukudi with a proposed investment of ₹16,000 crore.

Tata Electronics signed an MoU expressing an interest to invest ₹12,082 crore for an enclosure manufacturing and mobile phone assembly unit in Krishnagiri district and the project will generate over 40,500 jobs.

Mr. Stalin inaugurated First Solar's fully integrated solar manufacturing plant in Sriperumbudur. The company also signed a pact to invest a further ₹2,500 crore, which would provide over 350 jobs.

Hyundai Motor India has committed additional investments of ₹6,180 crore for setting up an unit to manufacture internal combustion engine (ICE) and EV passenger cars, and EV batteries in Kancheepuram district and collaborate with IIT-Madras on "Hydrogen Valley Innovation".

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A new high

ISRO should help everyone enjoy the fruits of its new science missions

On January 6 evening, a stream of commands transmitted by scientists and engineers of the Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO) were translated by a computer onboard the Aditya-L1 spacecraft into manoeuvres that guided it into orbit around an imaginary point in space. Thus, Aditya-L1 reached its destination, around the L1 Lagrange point, from where it will have an unfettered view of the sun for its expected lifetime of five years. Aditya-L1 is an observatory-class solar mission that will study the sun with seven instruments: VELC, a coronagraph to study the uppermost layer of the sun's atmosphere; SUIT, an ultraviolet imaging telescope; SoLEXS and HEL1OS, to study solar flares and coronal mass ejections; ASPEX and PAPA, to study the solar wind and plasma; and a set of digital magnetometers to measure properties of the magnetic field around the spacecraft. ISRO picked the L1 Lagrange point – 1.5 million km from the earth in the earth-sun direction and one of five Lagrange points in the earth-sun system – because the gravitational influences of the two bodies interact such that a smaller body here will not experience a net tug towards either. So, Aditya-L1 can stay at L1 while expending little fuel. Its scientific mission will begin in a month or so, once its thrusters' emissions drift away.

As such, Aditya-L1 supplements India's storied history of observing the sun – dating back to the Kodaikanal Solar Observatory, which commenced operations in 1901 – by lofting it into space. It also follows the XPoSat mission, launched on January 1 to become only the world's second X-ray polarimetry satellite, and eight years after AstroSat, which reached several highs of its own. An important issue with such achievements is public perception. For example, while Aditya-L1 and AstroSat are big strides from India's point of view, they pale in comparison to the imaging abilities of the James Webb Space Telescope, which is operated by three space agencies. Yet, many continue to expect the Indian spacecraft to capture hi-res photographs of the cosmos and are disillusioned when it does not. This is not fair (setting aside the fact that not all instruments are imagers). ISRO can do more, too, by expanding its own and its collaborating institutes' public outreach efforts, such as by hosting open days focused on specific missions and commissioning science communication on new results at regular intervals. Everyone should be able to celebrate a new high, but especially the people at large, so ISRO should also consider including components on missions that feed public interest. All these efforts will require funds, but considering the love ISRO has been getting from the government of late, it may just be a matter of asking.

Turmoil in Jharkhand

CM Soren's troubles are legal and political in almost equal measure

The Enforcement Directorate (ED) is keeping Jharkhand Chief Minister Hemant Soren on his toes as it pursues allegations against him and his close associates. The charges are related to tribal land transfers and illegal mining. Seven summons past, Mr. Soren has not appeared before the ED. He apparently fears his arrest ahead of the Lok Sabha elections and is preparing the ground for turning these corruption allegations into a political battle. The Chief Minister has been touring the State and mobilising people around his government's welfare measures with the slogan, 'Aapki Yojana Aapki Sarkar Aapke Dwar, i.e., Your scheme, your government, at your doorstep'. His attempts at getting some judicial reprieve have had very limited success. After the ED's first summons in August, Mr. Soren had approached the Supreme Court of India questioning its legality. The Court directed him to the Jharkhand High Court which rejected his petition on October 13, allowing the ED to continue with its investigations. This case is related to the purchase and sale of tribal land between 2020 and 2022, allegedly in violation of laws that restrict such transactions. In a mining lease allotment case, he appeared before the ED office in Ranchi in November 2022. He was facing allegations of allocating mining leases for himself, his wife and sister-in-law while holding the Mines Department portfolio. The High Court recently rejected a PIL that sought a Central Bureau of Investigation inquiry into this case.

The Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) is counting on the possible arrest of Mr. Soren and keeping up the political heat. ED investigations frequently turn out to be very convenient for the BJP. The party has launched a campaign to preempt the possibility of Mr. Soren's wife, Kalpana Soren, replacing him as Chief Minister in the event of his arrest. Ms. Soren belongs to a tribal community in Odisha, and she may not be eligible to contest a seat reserved for Scheduled Tribes in Jharkhand. The abrupt resignation of Sarfaraz Ahmad, Jharkhand Mukti Morcha (JMM) MLA from Gandey, a general seat, on January 1, 2024 has given some credence to the speculation that the Sorens may be preparing for a transition in the face of mounting legal troubles. The BJP has asked the Governor not to allow anyone who is not an MLA to take oath as Chief Minister. Meanwhile, a meeting of JMM, Congress and Rashtriya Janata Dal legislators on January 3 at Mr. Soren's official residence unanimously called for his continuation in office regardless of the way the case turns. Corruption is a serious challenge to democracy, but selective investigation against political opponents is no less so.

Aviation professionalism which India must draw from

"If there is a possibility of several things going wrong, the one that will cause the most damage will be the one to go wrong," is one of Murphy's general laws.

The aviation accident, on Tuesday, January 2, 2024, where a Japan Airlines (JAL) Airbus A350 aircraft collided with a Japanese Coast Guard Bombardier Dash 8 aircraft at Tokyo's Haneda airport while landing, in which all 379 passengers on the JAL plane escaped but with five fatalities on the smaller aircraft, is a perfect example of this. There was a notice to airmen issued for Haneda indicating that the stop bar, a set of red lights that come on at taxi holding point for that runway, was not available. The Coast Guard plane was cleared to the holding point, which was acknowledged by the pilot to Air Traffic Control (ATC). The ATC tape transcript also shows the JAL flight being cleared to land, which was acknowledged by the pilots. The investigation report will indicate what made the Coast Guard pilot enter the runway. Did he miss the notice to airmen? Did he not hear the ATC issue landing clearance to the JAL aircraft? The investigation report will identify these and we can expect the preliminary report in a fortnight, unlike accident reports in India which take months and years.

Aircraft manufacturers are required to demonstrate that an aircraft, in maximum density configuration, can be completely evacuated within 90 seconds using only half the total number of emergency exits. The world witnessed the highest quality of discipline and crew training, which saved 379 people in the fiery accident. It was an amazing display of orderly evacuation from the burning wreckage that the JAL cabin crew executed. All passengers followed the safety instructions and left the aircraft without carrying their hand bags or crowding around after coming down the aircraft evacuation slides. Only three exits were available for evacuation. The cabin public address system was not working and the crew used megaphone and voice announcements for the evacuation.

Captain A. (Mohan) Ranganathan

is a former airline instructor pilot and aviation safety adviser. He is also a former member of the Civil Aviation Safety Advisory Council (CASAC), India

Other incidents

On August 2, 2005, Air France flight, AF 358, from Paris, France, to Toronto overshot the runway while landing in heavy rain and caught fire. All 309 passengers were evacuated safely, though 11 received injuries. Images of the evacuation showed several passengers leaving the burning aircraft with their hand luggage. Similar action by passengers on an Emirates flight (EK 521) from Thiruvananthapuram to Dubai, on August 3, 2016, that crashed while landing, showed a complete lack of discipline on the part of passengers who were grabbing their hand luggage, thus delaying the evacuation. The aviation world should learn a lot from the absolutely high professional standards in JAL's training of its crew. Air passengers worldwide should also realise that pre-flight emergency procedure instructions should be followed seriously.

> India's aviation regulator and airlines have much to to learn from the Japan Airlines incident in terms of safety and training

Safety concerns, training flaws

The Japanese authorities have already made the ATC transcripts public. Contrast this with what would have been several months of silence and secrecy in India. Take the case of an extreme hard landing done by the crew of an Air India Airbus flight from Kochi to Dubai on December 20, 2023. The news surfaced only after a tracking site showed the aircraft flying to Mumbai on December 27 at an altitude of 9,000 ft instead of the normal 31,000-plus ft. Eventually, the news was that the flight had made a 3.5g landing at Dubai and was on ground for more than a week. To put that in simple language, 'g' is acceleration due to gravity. If an aircraft does a 1g landing, the weight on the wheels equals the weight of the aircraft. A 3.5g landing means the weight on the wheels of the aircraft at touchdown is 3.5 times its landing weight for that flight. Landing gears are not designed for such an impact and the resultant damage to crucial aircraft parts can be serious. The plane was permitted to depart as an unpressurised flight and was allowed just one take off and one landing.

Did the captain report the hard landing in the aircraft tech log? Did he file the flight safety report within 24 hours, a mandatory requirement by the Directorate General of Civil Aviation (DGCA)? What action did Air India take upon learning of the very hard landing? Why did it take more than 10 days to report this serious event? Was there an attempt to hush up this serious accident?

A disturbing fact is the failure of the Air India management to act proactively on a report by the instructor who trained the captain. He was a copilot on the airline's Boeing 777 fleet and was brought to the Airbus A320 fleet for his first command. The minimum hours on type that is required for first command were bypassed. Let me quote from the letter that the instructor had sent to the Chief of Training, Operations and also Safety of Air India. "Sir, they are facing difficulties in exercises which require manual flying skills and raw data flying and had to be recommended for corrective training twice. This I feel can be attributed to their lack of experience in the same, as they both are from the B777 fleet.

"God forbid if there is an incident/accident involving one of these pilots from the [airline's] 777/787 fleet, many questions will be raised, and we will not have any reasonable answers."

It was a case of shooting the messenger and the instructor pilot was sacked from Air India. Today, the airline has several questions to answer. The DGCA and Air India should look at the accidents caused by confusion of flying different types of aircraft, especially when fatigue and stress are involved. One can go back to October 12, 1976, when an Indian Airlines Caravelle flight from Bombay to Madras (IC 171) crashed shortly after take-off at Bombay and while attempting an emergency landing, killing all 95 passengers on board. The pilots had endorsements on their licences to fly the Boeing and the Caravelle. The switch positions for certain functions worked differently in each aircraft, which was highlighted in the court inquiry

In the Indian Airlines Airbus crash at Bangalore, on February 14, 1990, where there were 92 fatalities, the pilots were fresh from conversion training for the aircraft.

In the TAM Airlines Airbus crash in Sao Paulo, on July 17, 2007, this was the fourth sector of the day. Even though the flight was within duty time, one cannot discount the fatigue factor for the crew. The ATC calls on the wet runway condition were more in line with Boeing terminology. The aircraft also had one thrust reverser unserviceable. One of the pilots had flown previously on Boeing aircraft. The thrust lever action on a Boeing where the reverse thrust lever in the cockpit is wire locked is different from that on an Airbus. All on board the flight literally burnt to death.

In the Asiana crash in San Francisco, on July 6, 2013, the captain had flown previously on Airbus aircraft. On final approach for landing, he was lulled into thinking that the auto thrust would respond like in the Airbus he was so used to, forgetting that he was on a different aircraft.

Focus on standards

Air India has had a long history of covering up serious incidents and accidents with the blessings of the DGCA. The hard landing accident at Dubai should serve as a wake-up call for the airline. The airline has just inducted a new aircraft, the Airbus A350, and the criterion for the crew selected to fly it should be based on very high standards and not on seniority. While the first lot of captains are Airbus experienced, the second lot being sent for conversion are from the Boeing fleet. Both the DGCA and Air India should insist on a hard copy of the simulator proficiency check report/certification of the pilots training on this aircraft.

Merely stating that safety is paramount when so many incidents are being swept under the carpet will not improve the reputation of the airline. India can claim to be among the fastest growing aviation markets but where do we stand on the passenger safety count? The Air India management needs to do some soul searching when it comes to operations, training and safety. India and its airlines have much to learn from the Japan Airlines incident.

Structured negotiation as a boost for disability rights

Structured negotiation is a collaborative and solution-driven dispute resolution technique which is increasingly being used as an alternative to litigation. It typically involves inviting the defaulting service provider to the negotiation table and impressing upon them the benefits of complying with social welfare legislations.

While its utility pervades sectors, structured negotiation has been most effective in settling disability rights cases in the United States, a development that one of us, Ms. Feingold, has played no small part in ensuring.

Rahul Bajaj

is Co-Founder, Mission Accessibility, Senior Associate Fellow (Disability rights), Vidhi Centre for Legal Policy and a practising lawyer

Lainey Feingold

is an American lawyer, author and speaker

Its success rate

So far, structured negotiation has been successful in addressing the issues relating to inaccessible automated teller machines, point of sale devices, pedestrian signals and Service provider websites. It has convinced Walmart, CVS and Caremark to create accessible prescription bottles for blind or low vision customers. It has also been able to drive institutional reform by facilitating strategies for creating more accessible voting machines and websites.

At the heart of this success lies the win-win situation which the methodology of structured negotiation presents. Defaulting service providers want to avoid the high costs and negative publicity associated with litigation, while complainants want a barrier-free participation in the marketplace, both of which can be achieved through structured negotiation. This is not to dilute the role of the law and legal advocacy in securing the protection of rights of marginalised populations. Indeed, a key factor upon which the success of structured negotiation depends is the creation of a strong body of disabled-friendly legal precedents that create a robust foundation for structured negotiation to take place. Once courts are able to create a blueprint for what accessibility and compliance with the law in a given sector looks like, structured negotiation emerges as a pathway for businesses to ensure that they are able to make their offerings accessible without having to go through the rigmarole of litigation and for users with disabilities to obtain a disabled-friendly offering without the cost and unpleasantness associated with litigation.

> Its success lies in the win-win situation that its methodology presents, for defaulting service providers and complainants

India's red tape

As it is, the increasing pendency, paperwork and red tape in Indian civil courts are already dissuading parties from using traditional dispute resolution methods. India's flagship disability legislation, the Rights of Persons with Disabilities Act, 2016 provides that any non-compliance with its provisions may be reported to the Chief Commissioner for Persons with Disabilities ('CCPD'). The CCPD then puts the defaulting service provider on notice, and may then either direct them to make their services accessible or impose penalties on them for non-compliance. While the creation of a designated body for handling cases on disability rights has been a positive measure, its actual impact on repairing accessibility barriers in the marketplace remains to be seen.

For instance, the CCPD recently directed PayTM, a digital payments application to make its mobile applications accessible for Persons with Disabilities. In complying with the order, the PayTM application ultimately became more inaccessible. This incident demonstrates that any attempt to make digital services accessible for persons with disabilities in real time requires constant vigilance and user inputs which can validate the efficacy of solutions.

This is where the potential of a Structured Negotiation technique can be utilised. On one hand, it can allow service providers such as PayTM to avoid the embarrassment of being labelled as non-compliant. It can also help them avoid hefty legal fees and prevent their officials from being tied up in paperwork before courts for days. On the other hand, it can enable Persons with Disabilities to take their concerns directly to the service providers and monitor the fixes as they get implemented.

Priority is key

However, at the same time, it is pertinent to note here that the success of any alternative dispute resolution model is directly proportional to the level of priority that such service providers are willing to afford to the struggles of persons with disabilities. Till the time such providers continue to feel that there are no real benefits of providing any services to persons with disabilities, any attempts to settle these claims amicably outside courts would be a tall order to achieve.

That said, as Helen Keller noted, "optimism is the faith that leads to achievement". And so we submit that for India, the time to deploy structured negotiation in a big way has come. Businesses that refuse to join the bandwagon will be doing so at their own peril as they will be losing out on the enormous buying capacity that persons with disabilities possess, even keeping aside the question of legal compliance to one side. It is high time that businesses prioritised the needs of disabled users, and exhibiting openness to enter into a structured negotiation would be a powerful step in this direction.

The views expressed are personal

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Faith in politics

While our country proudly holds the title of the world's largest democracy, the reality is that our democratic and institutional processes fall short of their ideal standards. For instance, a viable solution to deal with unaccounted-for funds, amounting to crores, spent or confiscated during each election, still eludes us. Institutions tend to shy away from taking stringent actions. Of even greater concern is the immature behaviour by many of our politicians and their inclination to justify irrational and absurd actions. Despite their words or deeds, the media often glorifies them, possibly misconstruing it as political strategy! Meaningful reforms within our institutions and democratic mechanisms can only materialise if our leaders prioritise honesty, transparency and citizens' welfare above all else.

V. Nagarajan,
Chennai

'Still to decide'

The million-dollar question before the grand old party and other Opposition parties is whether they should attend the Ram Temple inauguration or not (Inside pages, January 7). While openly opposing it may disappoint a section, supporting it may alienate a core voter base. This is a catch-22 situation for a normal political party, but not for the Congress, whose ideology is based on the ideals within the Constitution. The Congress is advised to emulate Nehru, who, in 1951, did not attend the consecration of the Somnath temple, demonstrating his commitment to secularism and the idea of keeping religion away from state affairs.

P.H. Hema Sagar,
Secunderabad

Quality control

The notification for revised rules to ensure robust quality control of pharma and biopharmaceutical products by the Health ministry is timely (Inside pages, January 7). Reports of cough syrup deaths in Cameroon and Uzbekistan, which were flagged by the World Health Organization, did put the Indian pharma industry under the scanner. The revised Schedule M prescribing Good Manufacturing Practices (GMP) will bring Indian GMP recommendations on a par with global standards.

Dr. Thomas Palocaren,
Vellore, Tamil Nadu

The lacuna lies in not monitoring the process well, ensuring that at any point in time, the GMP is overlooked, unintentionally or deliberately. As a corollary, it will call for a big contingent of field staff to conduct regular inspections.

P.M. Gopalan,
Mumbai

Letters emailed to letters@thehindu.co.in must carry the full postal address.

Christmas under the rubble in Bethlehem

News of continued bombings in Gaza killing more than 22,500 Palestinians and of Israeli raids in the West Bank killing more Palestinians, as well as the cancellation of Christmas celebrations in Bethlehem, brought back memories of my life in Gaza between 1996 and 1998.

T.S. Tirumurti

was Ambassador/ Permanent Representative of India to the United Nations (2020-22) and first Indian Representative to the Palestinian Authority in Gaza (1996-98)

A difficult existence

The Palestinian chauffeur who worked in the Representative Office of India to the Palestinian Authority in Gaza had no permit to leave Gaza. Like thousands of other Gazans, he was virtually a prisoner in the world's largest prison. Therefore, for meetings in Ramallah or Jerico or Bethlehem in the West Bank, we were our own chauffeurs in our official car.

The first time I drove to Bethlehem from Gaza in 1996, after crossing the usual Israeli check points on the way, I took a wrong turn and found myself in the middle of an intersection. Fully armed Israel Defence Forces (IDF) soldiers stood on my right by their armoured vehicles. On my left, through tear gas, I saw Palestinian youngsters throwing stones at the IDF. I was in the middle of their fight in my black Volvo. The soldiers and the Palestinians were as surprised to find me there as I was to find them. I immediately reversed the car right to the end of my lane, all the while thinking that it was better to be shot in the chest than from behind. I then took the bigger, winding adjacent main road and saw a series of shops in a market, where Palestinian women and children were going about their daily shopping as if there was no fighting going on just a couple of roads away. In one defining image, I saw how people under occupation do not give up their fight but at the same time seek normalcy in their daily lives.

The indiscriminate killings of Palestinians in Gaza led to the Christmas celebrations in Palestine being cancelled last year. Unless one has travelled across the Holy Land, it's difficult to appreciate how historically Christianity has been woven into the fabric of Palestinian life. In 1996, the Church of the Nativity in Bethlehem was a mixed experience. Since I had seen the grandeur and pomp of the Vatican and other grand churches around the world, I had expected the adherents of the faith, irrespective of their denominations, from around the world to have contributed to build a grand church in the spot where Jesus was born. But the Church of the Nativity was anything but that; it was neglected and forlorn and had fallen into disrepair. However, I was overwhelmed at 'the Grotto', the manger where Jesus was born. It was at this hallowed site that Mary had "wrapped him (baby Jesus) in cloths and placed him in a manger." While many landmarks across the Holy Land, such as the Basilica of the Annunciation in Nazareth, the Church of the Multiplication of the Loaves and Fish at Tabgha, and the Church of the Holy Sepulchre in Jerusalem gave emphatic physical context to the Christian faith, it made sense to keep Bethlehem as simple and dignified as possible to preserve its divinity and reflect the way Jesus came into this world – quietly and almost unnoticed.

But in 1996, it was evident that Bethlehem coming into the hands of the Palestinian Authority had made little difference to the business of shopkeepers there. One shopkeeper told me in a matter-of-fact way that tourists arrived in Israeli buses and were advised not to shop in Bethlehem since Palestinians are "bad, violent people" and their lives would be at risk. Today, the situation is far worse. The violence of the Israeli settlers in the West Bank is forcing Palestinians to choose between their livelihoods and lives. Even their olive trees have not been spared.

The midnight mass in Bethlehem on December 24, 1996, was conducted not in the Church of the Nativity but in the adjacent Catholic Franciscan Church of St. Catherine with Palestinian President Yasser Arafat and others present. The mood was festive; Manger Square was decorated. It was a moment of hope for Palestinians of all faiths and they prayed for a better future. Now, with no Christmas celebrations in Bethlehem, they still wait for a better future, but without any hope or optimism.

The fight for Palestine

Apart from the terror attack of October 7, the disservice Hamas has done is project the conflict as one between Muslims and Jews rather than between Palestinians and Israelis. The fight is for Palestine – a nation which has belonged to Muslims, Christians, and Jews and not just to the people of one religion or another. The Palestine Liberation Organisation consisted of factions from the left to the right of the ideological spectrum before Israel propped up Hamas in Gaza as a counterpoise. Israel may decide to be Jewish, but Palestinians are Arabs consisting of both Muslims and Christians, even if the latter have dwindled in the recent past. And Israel has targeted them both. On December 16, 2023, two Christian women were killed by the IDF inside the Holy Family Parish in Gaza. The Armenian Patriarchate of Jerusalem recently issued a communique saying it is possibly under the "greatest existential threat" in its history. In October, Israel bombed the Church of Saint Porphyrius, the oldest church in Gaza, killing 18 Palestinians. The Missionaries of Charity of Mother Theresa in Gaza, which celebrated the golden jubilee in Gaza in the earlier months of 2023, were targeted by IDF rocket fire. In 1996, India's Representative Office in Gaza was in close touch with the Indian sisters. When asked what they wanted from India, their only request was Rin detergent bar since it kept their blue-bordered white cotton sarees whiter than any detergent could in Gaza.

Israel may decide to be Jewish, but Palestinians are Arabs consisting of both Muslims and Christians. And Israel has targeted them both

A Christmas feast and a controversy

Modi's Christmas lunch with Christian leaders has angered many in Kerala

STATE OF PLAY

K.S. Sudhi
sudhi.ks@thehindu.co.in

A Christmas feast hosted by Prime Minister Narendra Modi for a group of Christian priests and community leaders at his official residence in New Delhi has created controversy.

The event was facilitated by the Indian Minorities Foundation, a pro-Sangh Parivar organisation. Several prominent Christian leaders attended the lunch, including Cardinal Oswald Gracias, the Cardinal of the Roman Catholic Church of India and Archbishop of Bombay; Paul Swarup, the Bishop of the Diocese of Delhi, Church of North India; John Varghese, Principal, St. Stephen's College, Delhi; and Bishop Thomas Mar Antonios. They listened to the Prime Minister's address and posed for photographs with him. One of them gifted Mr. Modi a sculpture of Infant Jesus.

As expected, Mr. Modi did not refer to the sensitive issue of mass killings, including of Christians, and the destruction of churches in Manipur, and the alleged atrocities committed against the community across the country. He used the opportunity to recall his frequent meetings with Christian leaders during his tenure as Gujarat Chief Minister and said that he "proudly acknowledges" the contributions of Christians – from the freedom movement to their "active participation" in social service. He said that Christians have played an important role in "giving direction to society". He added that the benefits of development taking place in India have been reaching many Christians, including the poor and deprived.

However, the reported failure of the participants to broach the issue of the alleged violence against their brethren across the country and the killings in Manipur did not go down well with a number of priests across India and some politicians in Kerala. Some community leaders launched a signature campaign denouncing the participants for failing to highlight the "grave injustice" meted out to the community in Manipur and at large. Some of them also stated that Christians were reportedly attacked even on Christmas in Uttar Pradesh. Soon, a war of words ensued between the priests of various denominations who took sides on the contentious issue.

On December 30, Shaiju Kurian, the diocesan secretary of the Malankara Orthodox Church, who had joined the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) on December 30 in the presence of Union Minister V. Muralidharan, was removed from his priestly responsibilities. It was during a Christmas celebration organised by the Pathanamthitta district committee of the BJP that Mr. Kurian and a few Christians joined the party. The diocesan council has formed a commission to probe the complaints.

The developments have left a political impact in Kerala where the Church has a decisive say in electoral politics. Saji Cherian, the outspoken Minister in the ruling Left Front government, lambasted the priests who attended the lunch. Mr. Cherian said that they enjoyed wine and cake at the meeting but had failed to speak about the violence in Manipur with the Prime Minister. Later, he withdrew the words 'wine' and 'cake' from his statement after facing stiff opposition from the Kerala Catholic Bishop's Council.

Sensing that the Minister's words had hurt the sentiments of some sections of the clergy, the CPI(M) quickly distanced itself from the controversy and left Mr. Cherian to defend himself. Mr. Cherian, a State Secretariat member of the CPI(M), stuck to his political stand and consolidated his position by reading out data from a report of the United Christian Forum, an organisation that compiles data on atrocities against Christians in India. He said that there had been around 400 anti-Christian attacks in 2023 alone.

The controversy comes at a time when the BJP's Kerala unit has been trying to mend relations with the commuity after realising that it cannot make electoral gains in the State without winning the confidence of the minorities, especially Christians. BJP leaders visited priests on Christmas to talk of the Modi government's achievements.

Though the Christmas feast hosted by the Prime Minister was aimed at improving the BJP's relationship with the community, it has left a bad taste in the mouth of many Christians and their spiritual heads in Kerala. A meeting convened to win over the community members may not succeed when the wounds of recent communal incidents have not healed, and a large number of Christians continue to believe that they are being persecuted in India.

Is Rohit right about the double standards in pitch ratings?

Pitches in the Indian subcontinent get more sub-par ratings despite Tests getting completed in shorter durations across all cricketing nations

DATA POINT

Rebecca Rose Varghese & Vignesh Radhakrishnan

The second Test match between India and South Africa, which ended within two days on Thursday, with just 642 balls bowled, is the shortest completed Test match ever. Arguments about the pitch condition surfaced again after the match got over. This time, Indian captain Rohit Sharma did not pull any punches. He said he "did not mind" playing in "challenging" pitches as long as everyone does not "talk too much about Indian pitches". When pitches start "turning on Day 1 in India, people start talking about the puff of dust," he complained, but no one spoke of the many cracks in Newlands pitch. He said that the referees should rate pitches on "what they see and not based on the countries".

An analysis of pitch ratings by the ICC in Men's Tests between May 14, 2019 and December 26, 2023 shows that Sharma's accusations are borne out by facts. **Table 1** shows the pitch ratings (in %) for Men's Tests played during this period. Of the Tests played in India, 25% were rated 'very good', 13% 'good', 38% 'average', 13% 'below average', and 13% 'poor'. None of the pitches in New Zealand, South Africa, England, and West Indies were rated 'below average' or 'poor' whereas more than 10% of the Tests played in India, Bangladesh, Pakistan, and Sri Lanka were rated as having been played on 'below average' or 'poor' pitches. Precisely 10% of the Tests played in Australia were rated as having been played on 'poor' pitches.

That a higher share of pitches in the Indian subcontinent receive below par ratings while others don't shows a striking similarity to another aspect of the game. **Chart 2** shows the share of wickets claimed by pace and spin bowlers in Tests played after May 14, 2019 across host nations. In India, Bangladesh, Pakistan, and Sri Lanka, more than 50% of the wickets in Tests were claimed by spinners. In contrast, in New Zealand, South Africa, England, and West Indies, less than 25% were claimed by spinners. Australia is in the middle of the list in Table 1 and Chart 2.

One might argue that the pitches in the Indian subcontinent are actually poor and it is, in fact, a coincidence that the spinners also do well in the region. To clear this up, we analysed only those Test matches which was completed with relatively few balls bowled.

Table 3 shows all the completed Tests between May 14, 2019 and December 26, 2023, which consumed 60% or less of the possible deliveries. In other words, pitch ratings of those Tests which took less than 1,634 balls (60% or less than the 2,700 possible deliveries in a 90 over 5-day Test) were listed. Innings victories were ignored to avoid one-sided games.

In the 2023 India versus Australia Indore Test, the pitch was rated 'poor'. The game was completed in 1,135 balls with spinners from both teams taking most of the wickets. In contrast, in the 2022 England versus South Africa Test in Oval, which was completed in 909 balls, the pitch was rated 'average'. All the wickets in the game were taken by pace bowlers.

In the 2020 New Zealand versus India Test at Christchurch, which was completed in 1,309 balls, the pitch was rated 'good'. A majority of the wickets in the Test were taken by pace bowlers. In contrast, in the 2023 Bangladesh versus New Zealand Test in Mirpur, where spinners got most of the wickets and where the match got completed in 1,069 balls, the pitch was considered 'poor'.

To sum up, spin-friendly pitches were in general rated poorly. Also, two similar pitches on which Tests were completed with a fewer number of balls were rated differently based on the type of bowling that dominated the matches.

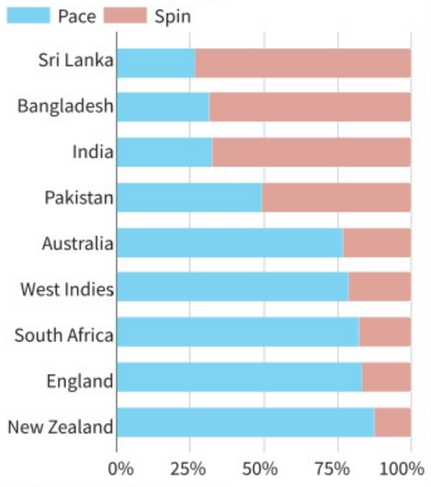
Pitching for a 'neutral' rating system

The charts and tables are based on data collated from ESPNcricinfo's Statsguru for Test matches

Table 1: The table shows the pitch ratings (in %) for Men's Tests played between May 14, 2019, and December 26, 2023. (Avg. = Average)

	Very Good	Good	Avg.	Below Avg.	Poor
India	25%	13%	38%	13%	13%
Ban.	-	63%	25%	-	13%
Pak.	-	25%	50%	25%	-
SL	13%	75%		13%	-
Aus.	40%	30%	20%	10%	-
WI	-	17%	83%	-	-
Eng.	6%	75%	19%	-	-
SA	-	83%	17%	-	-
NZ	75%	13%	13%	-	-

Chart 2: The chart shows the share of wickets claimed by pace and spin bowlers in Tests played after May 14, 2019, across host nations



vignesh.r@thehindu.co.in
rebecca.varghese@thehindu.co.in

Table 3: The table shows all the completed Tests between May 14, 2019, and December 26, 2023, which consumed 60% or less of the possible deliveries

Date	Match	City	Country	Balls	Pitch rating
Feb. 24, 2021	IND vs ENG	Ahmedabad	Ind.	842	Below Average
Dec. 17, 2022	AUS vs SA	Brisbane	Aus.	866	Below Average
Sep. 8, 2022	ENG vs SA	The Oval	Eng.	909	Average
Jun. 29, 2022	SL vs AUS	Galle	SL	920	Below Average
Mar. 2, 2021	AFG vs ZIM	Abu Dhabi	UAE	1007	Good
Jul. 24, 2019	ENG vs IRE	Lord's	Eng.	1053	Average
Dec. 6, 2023	BAN vs NZ	Mirpur	Ban.	1069	Poor
Jan. 3, 2021	SA vs SL	Johannesburg	SA	1118	Good
Mar. 1, 2023	IND vs AUS	Indore	Ind.	1135	Poor
Nov. 27, 2019	AFG vs WI	Lucknow	Ind.	1209	Good
Dec. 17, 2020	AUS vs IND	Adelaide	Aus.	1246	Good
Feb. 29, 2020	NZ vs IND	Christchurch	NZ	1309	Good
Jan. 14, 2022	AUS vs ENG	Hobart	Aus.	1312	Average
Feb. 17, 2023	IND vs AUS	Delhi	Ind.	1320	Average
Mar. 12, 2022	IND vs SL	Bengaluru	Ind.	1340	Below Average
Feb. 28, 2023	SA vs WI	Centurion	SA	1347	Good
Jun. 1, 2023	ENG vs IRE	Lord's	Eng.	1356	Good
Jul. 6, 2023	ENG vs AUS	Leeds	Eng.	1382	Good
Jun. 14, 2023	BAN vs AFG	Mirpur	Ban.	1428	Good
Jun. 24, 2022	WI vs BAN	Gros Islet	WI	1432	Good
Feb. 21, 2020	NZ vs IND	Wellington	NZ	1507	Very Good
Jun. 2, 2022	ENG vs NZ	Lord's	Eng.	1519	Good
Jun. 16, 2022	WI vs BAN	North Sound	WI	1551	Average
Feb. 16, 2023	NZ vs ENG	Mount Maunganui	NZ	1563	Good
Dec. 8, 2021	AUS vs ENG	Brisbane	Aus.	1577	Average
Dec. 17, 2022	PAK vs ENG	Karachi	PAK	1582	Average
Dec. 3, 2021	IND vs NZ	Wankhede	Ind.	1587	Very Good
Jan. 3, 2022	SA vs IND	Johannesburg	SA	1624	Good
Jul. 24, 2020	ENG vs WI	Manchester	Eng.	1632	Good
Jun. 10, 2021	ENG vs NZ	Birmingham	Eng.	1633	Good
Aug. 20, 2021	WI vs PAK	Kingston	WI	1633	Very Good

FROM THE ARCHIVES
The Hindu.

FIFTY YEARS AGO JANUARY 8, 1974

Tube Rly. for Madras approved "in principle"

Madras, Jan. 7: The Government of India has decided "in principle" to go in for an underground railway network for the Metropolitan Madras area. Such "in principle" decisions have been taken in respect of the other three metropolitan areas - Calcutta, Bombay and Delhi. In the case of Calcutta, work with Russian collaboration has started, on the underground transportation system. Some provision is expected to be made in the Fifth Plan for the other proposed underground railway networks. Mr. L.N. Mishra, Railway Minister, told newsmen here to-day that the progress of the schemes would depend on the availability of foreign collaborations and funds. The next stage for the Madras scheme would be the preparation of exact cost estimates and location and other surveys, work on which would start soon. The schemes would be taken up in the order of Bombay, Delhi and Madras, though that did not mean that one project would wait for the completion of the other. Answering questions, Mr. Mishra said these schemes were costly, besides being dependent on foreign collaboration. The Railway Board was keen on the same pattern standardised for all the four metropolitan areas to avoid difficulties of spare parts, components etc. in future. With this in view, a search was on for foreign collaboration. The schemes might take 10 years and more for completion. Even the Calcutta scheme on which work had commenced was expected to be completed only in 1979 or 1980.

A HUNDRED YEARS AGO JANUARY 8, 1924

Gold mining in Mysore

Mysore, Jan. 5: The number of gold mining companies which carried an operation during 1922-23 remained stationary at 5. Four of these are reported to have produced gold and paid dividends while one produced gold but was unable to pay dividends. The total quantity of bar gold produced during the Calender year 1922 and the value thereof were: 4,29,599 ounces and £1,789,432 respectively against 4,22,532 ounces and £2,015, 568 respectively in 1921. The decrease of nearly 11 and one-fourth per cent is almost entirely due to a decline in the price of the metal.

From Page One

J&K to have no local body members

J&K has been under Central rule since June 2018 when a coalition government of the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) and the People's Democratic Party (PDP) collapsed, and the Assembly was dissolved. The Assembly elections were last held in 2014. After the special status of J&K under Article 370 of the Constitution was removed by Parliament in August 2019, the former State was bifurcated and downgraded into the Union Territories of J&K and Ladakh, the latter without a Legislative Assembly.

Union Home Minister Amit Shah has said that a call on restoring the Statehood of J&K will be taken after Assembly elections are held. On December 11, the Supreme Court directed the Election Commission of India to hold Assembly elections in J&K by September 30, 2024.

With regard to the panchayat fund, Mr. Sharma added that as the redrawing of panchayat boundaries is on, the administration should ensure that population figures are also taken into account before disbursing the money. "If a panchayat has 2,500 population, then also it is entitled to the same funds as that of a panchayat which has 1,000 people. This discrepancy should be addressed by the government," Mr. Sharma said.

In September 2018, the Union government transferred the functions of 29 subjects to the panchayats under the 73rd amendment to the Constitution, including the functioning of primary health centres, primary schools, and anganwadi centres. J&K had partially adopted the recommendations after the 73rd Constitutional Amendment Act, providing a constitutional status to the panchayati raj institutions, was passed by the Parliament in 1993.

In 2020, the Union Cabinet approved the adaptation of the Jammu and Kashmir Panchayati Raj Act, 1989 that was amended by the Ministry of Home Affairs the same year. This paved the way for the creation of District Development Councils in the UT, whose members are directly elected by the people; the elected members of the legislative Assembly have no say in this process. "The move will help establish all the three tiers of grassroot-level democracy like in other parts of the country," Union Minister Prakash Javadekar had said.

GST reveals dissonance in consumption growth

Among the 20 largest States that account for nearly 97% of State GST collections, two large States, Gujarat (9.5%) and West Bengal (9.8%) are the only ones to clock less than double-digit growth, while 10 others have grown at rates lower than the national average of 15.2%.

On the other hand, eight States, led by Madhya Pradesh, Maharashtra, Karnataka, Haryana, Uttar Pradesh, Tamil Nadu, and Telangana have seen State GST revenues rise in a range of 17% to 18.8%.

"Gujarat, West Bengal, Delhi and Odisha are among the top 10 GST contributors where growth was slower, while eight States have driven the overall collections with growth higher than the national average. This is indicative of consumption being uneven across geographies... and may explain why overall consumption in the country has not been growing at a higher pace," the bank's economists concluded in a research note on variations in State GST collections.

"Quite clearly, an improvement in consumption across some of the States that are lagging today will help boost both GDP growth and GST collections," the bank's researchers, led by chief economist Madan Sabnavis, noted. In States like Odisha, Rajasthan and Chhattisgarh, where GST revenues have grown less than 11% so far this year, tepid rural demand due to weaker farm sector outcomes could have played a factor, they reckoned.

India Ratings and Research economists flagged the lack of significant wage growth, which turned marginally negative for lower income households while rising 6.4% for their upper income counterparts in the second quarter of this year, as another critical factor for consumption growth.

Maldives suspends three Deputy Ministers for remarks against Modi

India 'strongly raises' issue of 'disrespectful' comments about PM with the Foreign Office; the three leaders had commented about PM's visit to Lakshadweep; Muizzu govt. distances itself from remarks; senior Maldivian leaders condemn comments

Kallol Bhattacherjee
NEW DELHI

The Indian High Commission in the Maldives on Sunday "strongly raised" the issue of disrespectful remarks about Prime Minister Narendra Modi made by a few members of the government of President Mohamed Muizzu.

The Maldivian government suspended three Deputy Ministers who are at the centre of the controversy which erupted just a day before Mr. Muizzu is scheduled to depart for his first trip to China.

"Our High Commission in the Maldives had strongly raised and expressed concerns about the comments made in regard to PM by certain Ministers in the Maldives Government with the Foreign Office today," said a source.

The issue started after three Deputy Ministers in the Ministry of Youth Affairs – Maryam Shiuna, Malsha Shareef and Mahzoom Majid – made disparaging remarks about India and Mr. Modi after the Prime Minister's recent visit to Lakshadweep.

Maintaining ties: Prime Minister Narendra Modi with President Mohamed Muizzu during the climate summit in UAE. FILE PHOTO

In a post on social media platform X, Ms. Shiuna referred to India's ties with Israel and made disparaging comments about Mr. Modi. Her colleagues joined in and said that the visit by the Indian Prime Minister to Lakshadweep was aimed at challenging Maldivian tourism which prides itself on its famous beachside facilities.

These comments amplified by their supporters soon triggered a war of words on social media that escalated with Indian tourists cancelling hotel bookings in the Maldives.

In damage-control mode, the Muizzu government distanced itself from the remarks, with the Maldivian Foreign Ministry saying that "it believes in freedom of expression but that has to be exercised in a responsible manner". "These opinions are personal and do not represent the views of the Government of Maldives. Moreover, the relevant authorities of the Government will not hesitate to take action against those who make such derogatory remarks," the Foreign Ministry said. The three Deputy Ministers were suspended later.

Prominent Maldivians, including former Foreign Minister and former President of the UN General Assembly Abdulla Shahid, condemned the comments, describing them as "reprehensible and odious". "I call on the Government to reprimand these officials. Public figures must maintain decorum," Mr. Shahid said.

Former President Mohamed Nasheed came down strongly on the three leaders and said, "Muizzu government must distance itself from these comments and give clear assurance to India they do not reflect gov policy." Former President Ibrahim Mohamed Solih termed the remarks as "hateful".

The war of words that came ahead of the China visit has added to the tension as Mr. Muizzu hit the headlines soon after his November swearing-in by asking India to withdraw its military presence from the archipelago. India has been maintaining that the military presence there is mainly aimed at providing medical support to the distant islands of the Indian Ocean nation.

Mr. Muizzu subsequently met Mr. Modi during the climate summit in Dubai on December 1. He, however, chose Turkiye as the destination for his first foreign visit. This was followed by the decision to visit China from January 8 to 12.

SC to deliver verdict in Bilkis Bano case today

The Hindu Bureau
NEW DELHI

A Supreme Court Bench headed by Justice B.V. Nagarathna is scheduled on Monday to pronounce its judgment on petitions challenging the Gujarat government's decision to prematurely release 11 men sentenced to life for the gang rape of Bilkis Bano and murder of her family during the 2002 riots.

The Bench, including Justice Ujjal Bhuyan, had reserved the case for judgment in October 2023. The court had heard writ petitions separately filed by Ms. Bano and others.

The arguments primarily focused on whether the State had followed uniform standards while granting early remission to the 11 men when murder convicts tend to otherwise languish in prison for years.

Ms. Bano's lawyer, advocate Shobha Gupta, had submitted that the convicts of the Bilkis Bano case did not deserve remission for the heinous nature of their crimes.

'29,000-plus firms busted since May for fake invoices'

The Hindu Bureau
NEW DELHI

Over 29,000 bogus firms, involved in evading Goods and Services Tax (GST) dues of more than ₹44,000 crore, have been busted over the past seven months, leading to 121 arrests, the Finance Ministry said on Sunday.

This is a result of a special drive against fake invoices supplied by non-existent firms, being carried out by the Central Board of Indirect Taxes and Customs with State governments. Fake invoices are used by firms to avail input tax credit (ITC) without any underlying supply of goods and services taking place.

"Since the initiation of the special drive against fake registrations in mid-May 2023, a total of 29,273 bogus firms involved in suspected Input Tax Credit (ITC) evasion of ₹44,015 crore have been detected. This has saved ₹4,646 crore of which ₹3,802 crore is by blocking of ITC and ₹844 crore is by way of recovery," the Ministry said.

Mizoram to continue helping displaced Chins, Kukis, says CM

The Hindu Bureau
GUWAHATI

The Mizoram government will continue to shelter the displaced Chins from Myanmar and the Kuki-Zo communities from Manipur, Chief Minister Lalduhoma said on Sunday.

The Chin and Kuki-Zo people are ethnically related to the majority Mizos of Mizoram. Together, they form the Zo group.

The Chief Minister told presspersons in the State's capital, Aizawl, that he discussed the "refugee" crisis and other issues with Prime Minister Narendra Modi, Home Minister Amit Shah, and External Affairs Minister S. Jaishankar in New Delhi last week.

"The Centre is ready to work together with the Mizoram government to assist the displaced people," he said.

Mr. Lalduhoma said the Centre cannot grant refugee status to the displaced from Myanmar as India is not a signatory to the 1951 Refugee Convention and its 1967 Protocol. He hoped New Delhi would not go ahead with the plan to fence the 1,643 India-Myanmar boundary, of which 510 km borders Mizoram. The Zoram People's Movement government, headed by Mr. Lalduhoma, is opposed to fencing as it feels it will further divide the Zo group of people already separated by the inter-State and international boundaries.

Lalduhoma

The Mizoram government claims the State is currently sheltering some 31,000 Chin people who fled a civil war in Myanmar and about 12,000 Kuki-Zo people who escaped an ethnic conflict with the majority Meiteis in Manipur.

Trouble in Myanmar began after a military coup in February 2021, while ethnic violence broke out in Manipur on May 3, 2023.

Rajnath Singh leaves for a 3-day visit to U.K.

Press Trust of India
LONDON

Defence Minister Rajnath Singh is set to embark upon a three-day visit to the U.K. from Monday, seen as significant to the bilateral partnership in the sphere of defence and security as the last ministerial level visit took place 22 years ago.

Besides wide-ranging talks with his U.K. counterpart, Defence Secretary Grant Shapps, Mr. Singh is expected to inspect a ceremonial Guard of Honour and undertake visits to Mahatma Gandhi and Dr. B.R. Ambedkar memorials in London. A community interaction with members of the Indian diaspora in the U.K. is also expected to be part of the Defence Minister's three-day itinerary.

As both India and the U.K. prepare for a general election this year, all aspects of the relationship are in sharp focus, including sped-up negotiations towards a free trade agreement (FTA) expected to significantly enhance the GBP 36-billion bilateral partnership.

Prime Minister Narendra Modi attends the 58th All India Conference of Directors-General and Inspectors-General of Police in Jaipur. ANI

Use social media influencers: PM tells police chiefs

Vijaita Singh
NEW DELHI

Prime Minister Narendra Modi urged the top police officers of the country to explore whether social media influencers can be engaged to disseminate information in public interest, according to a senior government official.

While addressing the three-day annual Director-General of Police (DGP) conference in Jaipur, Mr. Modi said that there was a need to use social media effectively. He also called for the training of police officials in handling cyber-related crimes and the challenges posed by Artificial Intelligence (AI).

A press statement said that the Prime Minister underscored the need to reinforce the positive image of the police among citizens. He advised the use of social media at the police station-level to disseminate positive information and messages for the benefit of citizens. He also suggested using social media to spread advance information on natural calamities and disaster relief.

Citizen connect

"He also suggested organising various sports events as a way to strengthen citizen-police connect. He also urged the government officials to stay in border villages to establish better 'connect' with local populace as these border villages were the 'first villages' of India," the statement said.

The Prime Minister discussed the enactment of the three new criminal laws at the conference, adding that it was a paradigm shift in the criminal justice system. He emphasised that the new criminal laws had been framed with the spirit of 'Citizen First, Dignity First and Justice First'. Instead of working with a '*danda*' (police baton), the police must now work with 'data', he said.

Mr. Modi urged the police chiefs to think imaginatively to convey the emotional spirit behind the newly enacted laws to the different sections of society, laying special focus on sensitising women and girls about the rights and protections provided to them under the new laws.

Rescue efforts

The 58th police conference, inaugurated by Union Home Minister Amit Shah on January 5, concluded on Sunday. The event was organised by the Intelligence Bureau.

During the event, the Prime minister held detailed discussions with senior police officers on subjects such as human trafficking, security of borders, cyber-threats, radicalisation, fraudulent issuance of identity documents, and the threats emerging from AI.

In his closing address on Sunday, Mr. Modi applauded the efforts of the Indian Navy's efforts in rescuing 21 people, including 15 Indians, from a merchant vessel in the Arabian Sea.

He also mentioned the successful placement of the Aditya-L1 spacecraft in a halo orbit around the Lagrangian point (L1).

The conference was held in hybrid mode with DGPs, IGPs, and the chiefs of central police organisations attending the three-day event in Jaipur, while over 500 police officers of various ranks participated via video conferencing.

Hasina to return as PM as her party sweeps polls

Press Trust of India
DHAKA

Mound of mandate: Election officials empty ballot boxes at a polling station in Munshiganj of Bangladesh on Sunday. AP

Bangladesh Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina on Sunday secured a record fourth straight term as her Awami League party won two-thirds of the seats in the general elections marred by sporadic violence and a boycott by the main Opposition Bangladesh Nationalist Party (BNP) and its allies.

Ms. Hasina's party won 200 seats in the 300-seat parliament while counting is still under way after the end of the day-long voting on Sunday. "We can call Awami League winner with the already available results but the final announcement will be made after the end of the counting of votes in the rest of the constituencies," an election commission spokesman told presspersons. She won the Gopalganj-3 seat for the eighth time since 1986. She bagged 2,49,965 votes while her nearest rival M. Nizam Uddin Lashkar from the Bangladesh Supreme Party secured just 469. The 76-year-old leader, who has been ruling the strategically located nation since 2009, secured a record fourth consecutive term and fifth overall term in the one-sided election, which witnessed a low turnout.

Two crucial judgments saw SC take govt. at its word on setting things right

NEWS ANALYSIS

Krishnadas Rajagopal
NEW DELHI

Two recent judgments have seen the Supreme Court bank on the government's assurances to set things on track.

The first came from a Constitution Bench headed by Chief Justice of India D.Y. Chandrachud, which decided to rest easy on the back of an assurance given by the Solicitor-General, representing the Union government, that Statehood will soon be restored to Jammu and Kashmir.

In the second judgment, a three-judge Bench, also led by the CJI, took the word of the Solicitor-General, representing the Securities and Exchange Board of India (SEBI), that its investigations against the Adani Group will be completed expeditiously.

Article 144 of the Constitution mandates that "all authorities, civil and judicial, in the territory of India shall act in aid of the Supreme Court".

"The Solicitor-General (for the Union of India) submitted that Statehood will be restored to Jammu and Kashmir and that its status as a Union Territory is temporary," Chief Justice Chandrachud observed.

This is part of the lead opinion which he authored on December 11 while upholding the abrogation of the special status of J&K under Article 370 and the reorganisation of the State of Jammu and Kashmir into two Union Territories. The court chose to accept the Solicitor-General's submission that the status of the Union Territory of Ladakh would "not be affected" by the restoration of Statehood to J&K.

"In view of the submission made by the Solicitor-General that Statehood would be restored of Jammu and Kashmir, we do not find it necessary to determine whether the reorganisation of the State of Jammu and Kashmir into two Union Territories of Ladakh and Jammu and Kashmir is permissible under Article 3," the court concluded.

Article 3 deals with any alterations made in the name or area of a State, and says that the question should be referred to the State Legislature for its views.

'Comprehensive probe'

In the Hindenburg-Adani case, the three-judge Bench found the SEBI investigation into the Adani Group "comprehensive". The petitioners had sought a transfer of the probe from the SEBI to another agency or even the formation of a special investigation team.

However, the CJI noted that 22 investigations were over, while two remained pending. The court virtually endorsed the SEBI's role as regulator and investigator, saying that there was no "apparent regulatory failure" nor "deliberate inaction or inadequacy" in the probe against the Adani Group.

Cong. starts seat-sharing talks, names observers for 539 seats

Party is looking to wrap up discussions in the next few days and finalise a formula by end of the month and is likely to contest anywhere between 255 and 300 seats; hard bargain expected in Kerala, West Bengal, Delhi and Punjab

The Hindu Bureau
NEW DELHI

On a day when senior leaders started seat-sharing talks in some States with partners of the Indian National Developmental, Inclusive Alliance (INDIA), the Congress on Sunday announced names of observers for 539 Lok Sabha seats across the country.

"The Congress party has just released the list of coordinators covering 539 Parliamentary constituencies with 4 more to come soon," Congress communications chief Jairam Ramesh said in an X post.

This comes a day after Congress chief Mallikarjun Kharge, at a press conference on Saturday, asserted that the party would assess every Lok Sabha constituency. Though the party has not given out the exact number of Lok Sabha seats it would contest, it is believed to be looking at anywhere between 255 and 300. "We will go and assess each parliamentary constituency... Ultimately, when the INDIA alliance is there and negotiations are held in each State, the exact number will come out. But, we are trying to put in effort everywhere," Mr. Kharge had said.

Full steam ahead: INDIA bloc leaders at a press conference after a meeting in New Delhi on December 19. ANI

Sources said talks have begun with some parties as the Congress is looking to wrap up negotiations in the next few days and finalise the seat-sharing formula by the end of the month.

The INDIA bloc plans to field a single Opposition candidate against the BJP in as many Lok Sabha seats as possible for the election.

The most contentious States include Kerala, West Bengal, Delhi and Punjab, where the Congress leadership will find seat-sharing agreement tough. Formal negotiations for seat-sharing with the Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) in Punjab and Delhi will begin on Monday, the sources cited above said.

In Punjab, the State units of the AAP and Congress are opposed to any kind of seat-sharing arrangement as both the parties have expressed their confidence of doing well in the election.

In West Bengal, the Congress will have to choose between Trinamool Congress and the Left Front, though both are part of the INDIA bloc. In the past one week, Trinamool leaders and the Congress's West Bengal unit chief, Adhir Ranjan Chowdhury, have got into a war of words.

In Kerala, any tie-up with the ruling LDF would mean that the Congress will have to rest or drop some of their MPs. In Uttar Pradesh, relations between the Samajwadi Party and the Congress have been cold after the SP was not offered any seat by the Congress in the Madhya Pradesh Assembly poll.

The Congress has pre-poll alliances with parties such as the DMK in Tamil Nadu, Rashtriya Janata Dal and Janata Dal(U) in Bihar, Jharkhand Mukti Morcha and small regional players in Assam but even in these States, the party's bargaining position has weakened after losses in the recent Assembly elections.

Don't treat common people of J&K as enemies or militants, says Mehbooba

The Hindu Bureau
SRINAGAR

Former Jammu and Kashmir Chief Minister and Peoples Democratic Party (PDP) chief Mehbooba Mufti on Sunday said that reconciliation, not repression, was the way to peace with dignity in the Union Territory.

Speaking at the eighth death anniversary of PDP founder and her father, Mufti Mohammad Sayeed, Ms. Mufti said: "We recommit ourselves to the ideals he stood for – peace, reconciliation, and justice. Mufti Sahab's legacy lives on in our hearts, and it is our collective responsibility to carry forward the torch of his vision."

Ms. Mufti expressed concern over the way the Union government was treating the people of Jammu & Kashmir. "Don't treat common people of J&K as enemies or militants. In Nagaland, you are entering into accord with militants, and in J&K, you are treating common people as militants as was done in Topi Peer Bufliaz in Poonch [where three civilians died after being detained by Army]. Is this how you treat your own people?" the PDP president said.

Former leaders' visit

Meanwhile, two former PDP leaders, Muzaffar Hussain Baig and his wife, Safine Baig, visited the mausoleum of Mufti Sayeed in Dara Shikoh Garden, Bijehara. This is seen by many as an indicator that they might rejoin the party.

Ms. Mufti also urged party workers and supporters "not to lose hope in the face of challenges".

"There is the need to continue the struggle for dignified peace through the values and vision set forth by Mufti Mohammad Sayeed," she said.

INBRIEF

Tell Bihar voters about efforts to construct Ram Temple: BJP

The Bihar unit of the BJP on Sunday convened its core committee meeting, led by State BJP in-charge and national general secretary Vinod Tawde, and Bihar unit president Samrat Choudhary. During the meeting, discussion on several issues took place, however the focus was on tackling the *Mahagatbandhan* in Bihar in the Lok Sabha election. "During the meeting, it was decided that leaders should now spend more time in the Lok Sabha constituencies and spread the work of Prime Minister Narendra Modi with emphasis on the Ram Mandir," a senior BJP leader who attended the meeting said.

Dorjee Lepcha is BJP's pick for RS election in Sikkim

Dorjee Tshering Lepcha, who helped the BJP enter the Sikkim Assembly without winning a single seat, has been named the party's candidate for the lone Rajya Sabha seat from the State. The nomination is seen as a reward for Mr. Lepcha, who broke away from the Sikkim Democratic Front (SDF) after the 2019 Assembly election along with nine others to join the BJP. The SDF had ruled Sikkim for almost 25 years until losing the 2019 poll to the Sikkim Krantikari Morcha. "Our central leaders have acknowledged Lepcha*ji*'s contribution to making the party grow in Sikkim," a leader said, after BJP national general secretary Arun Singh announced Mr. Lepcha's name.

Congress condemns arrest of two editors in Manipur

The Congress on Sunday deplored the reported arrest of two editors of vernacular newspapers in Manipur and demanded their immediate release. Congress leader Pawan Khera said that in yet another crackdown on press freedom, two editors had been arrested by the government. On December 31, the police arrested Wangkhemcha Shyamjai, the editor of *Kangleipaki Meira*, for allegedly publishing "provocative news", he said. On January 5, they arrested the editor of Meitei language newspaper *Hueiyen Lanpao,* Dhanabir Maibam, for "promoting enmity on the ground of religion and race", he said. "We firmly believe that journalists should be allowed to pursue their professional duties without fear of intimidation, especially when reporting on matters of public interest," Mr. Khera said. PTI

Arrest leader involved in ED assault case: Governor

Press Trust of India
KOLKATA

Expressing concern that Trinamool Congress leader Shahjahan Sheikh, the prime accused in the case of assault on Enforcement Directorate officials, may have "crossed the border", West Bengal Governor C.V. Ananda Bose on Sunday instructed authorities to arrest him immediately, and investigate his alleged connections with terrorists.

"On receipt of a complaint in the Peace Room of Raj Bhavan that Shahjahan Sheikh is supported by some political leaders with the connivance of some police officers, Hon'ble Governor instructed the police chief to arrest the culprit forthwith and report compliance," the Raj Bhavan statement read.

The complaint alleging that Mr. Sheikh is "in touch with terrorists" may be "enquired into immediately", it added.

The Governor's remarks insinuating that Mr. Sheikh has links with terrorists drew sharp criticism from the ruling Trinamool.

At mega rally in Kolkata, CPI(M) vows to fight Trinamool Congress and BJP

Shiv Sahay Singh
KOLKATA

In a show of strength ahead of the Lok Sabha election, thousands of supporters of the Communist Party of India (Marxist) gathered at the Brigade Parade Grounds here and vowed to fight the Trinamool Congress government in West Bengal and the BJP regime at the Centre.

The gathering organised by the Democratic Youth Federation of India (DYFI), the youth wing of the CPI (M), marked the culmination of its 'Insaaf Yatra'. The DYFI leadership started the yatra on November 3. It traversed about 2,000 km across several districts of the State.

"On behalf of those gathered at Brigade, I congratulate those who have travelled so many kilometres. There is still a lot of distance to be covered," CPI(M) State secretary Mohammad Salim said, addressing the gathering.

CPI(M) leaders such as Biman Bose and Surjya Kanta Mishra were present at the rally. Mr. Salim shared the dais with the DYFI leadership. "We do not need help from any Delhi to save West Bengal," the CPI(M) leader said, implying that the Left was the alternative to the Trinamool Congress and not the BJP.

Massive turnout: DYFI president A.A. Rahim speaking during a public meeting organised following the culmination of its 50-day-long 'Insaf Yatra', at the Brigade Parade Ground in Kolkata on Sunday. PTI

DYFI State secretary Meenakshi Mukherjee said people should be prepared for a bigger battle where caste, religion and identity do not matter, and issues of livelihood take priority.

Issues of corruption of the West Bengal government and unemployment across the country were raised at the rally.

Non-payment of wages

Former DYFI State secretary Abhas Roychowdhury raised questions over the non-payment of wages to the MGNREGS workers in West Bengal. Mr. Roychowdhury asked why the Trinamool Congress government was not moving the Supreme Court if the Centre was not paying dues to the workers.

DYFI national president A.A. Rahim described the rally as a success and said: "This is a remarkable and a revolutionary day."

The spontaneous gathering of thousands of people at the DYFI rally comes as a shot in the arm of the CPI(M) leadership, which has been suffering electoral setbacks since the 2011 Assembly election.

Department of Women and Child Development and Empowerment of Differently Abled and Senior Citizens
Office of the Secretary to Government, 1st Floor, M.S.Building, Bengaluru-560001.

Tender Notification No.: DWCD/2023-24/IND0023 Date: 06/01/2024

TENDER NOTIFICATION
(Karnataka Public Procurement mode only, Two cover System)

TENDER FOR SUPPLY OF EGG FOR THE YEAR 2023-24

Department of Women and Child Development hereby invites technical and financial tenders (Two cover System) from officially registered and eligible suppliers for the supply of Egg for **Bengaluru Divisions,** Anganwadi Centers (AWCs) of CDPO offices in the State of Karnataka. Interested bidders shall submit the bids through Government of Karnataka's Karnataka Public Procurement portal **(http://kppp.karnataka.gov.in).** Tenderer shall deposit the EMD in accordance with the tender document.

1. Tender document available for download: Date: **06.01.2024 and onwards. 2.** Pre-bid meeting Date: **19.01.2024 at 11.00 a.m. 3.** Last date and Time for uploading online queries in Karnataka Public Procurement portal Date: **25.01.2024 up to 5.00 p.m 4.** Last date for receipt of Tender Date: **06.02.2024 upto 5.00 p.m. 5.** Opening of Technical bid Date: **09.02.2024 by 11.00 a.m. 6.** Tentatively fixed date for opening of financial bid after verification of documents submitted in technical bid Date: **22.02.2024 by 11.00 a.m.**

Copies of tender announcement and tender documents are available from (a) Tender inviting authority-Director, Department of Women and Child Development, Bengaluru (b) State Tender Bulletin Officer-Deputy Secretary, Department of Women and Child Development and Empowerment of Differently Abled and Senior Citizens, Bengaluru. Further details may be obtained from the office of the Joint Director (ICDS), Department of Women and Child Development, Anandrao circle, Bangalore (Tel No: 080-22353780).

Sd/-
Deputy Secretary to Government and
State Tender Bulletin Officer

DIPR/CP/2922/SPAN/2023-24

Government of Odisha, **"e"- Procurement Notice**
INVITATION FOR BIDS (IFB)
Bid Identification No. C.C.E.Dkl.(R&B) 27/2023-24

Letter No. 17 / Dt.03/01/2024 Email Id- sedklpwd@gmail.com

The Chief Construction Engineer, Dhenkanal (R&B) Circle, Dhenkanal on behalf of Governor of Odisha invites Percentage Rate bids in double cover system to be received in ONLINE MODE from eligible contractors for construction of Bridge & Road works as detailed below:

1. Name of the work	:	**Bridge & Road works.**
2. No of works	:	**02 (Two) No**
3. Estimated Cost	:	**Rs. 6.02 crore to Rs. 9.12 crore (as given in column No.03 of table)**
4. Cost of tender paper	:	**Rs.10,000.00**
5. Class of contractor	:	**'A' & 'Special' Class (as given in column No.07 of table)**
6. Period of Completion of work	:	**07 (Seven) to 11 (Eleven)** Calendar months **(as given in column No.08 of table)**
7. Date and time of availability of bid Document in the website	:	From Dt.**08.01.2024** to **5.00 P.M. of Dt.22.01.2024**
8. Date of opening of bid	:	Dt.**22.01.2024** at **5.30 P.M.**

The bidders have to participate in ONLINE biding only, further details can be seen from the e- Procurement Portal : **www.tendersodisha.gov.in**. Any addendum / corrigendum / cancellation of tender can also be seen in the said website.

Chief Engineer, Dhenkanal (R&B) Circle, Dhenkanal

B-1563 OIPR - 34132/11/0035/2324

KERALA MEDICAL SERVICES CORPORATION LTD
(DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH & FAMILY WELFARE, GOVT. OF KERALA)
Head Office : Thycaud, Thiruvananthapuram-14,
(Telephone No. 0471-2945600, FAX No. 0471-2945647),
E-mail : oncocare@kmscl.kerala.gov.in,
website : www.kmscl.kerala.gov.in, CIN No. U24233KL2007SGC021616

No.KMSCL/ED/40/2023 Date : 05.01.2024

E- TENDER NOTICE

Online bids are invited from manufacturers/direct importers/ loan licensees on behalf of Department of Health, Govt of Kerala for the Procurement of Anti Cancer Drugs for the year 2024-25.

Sl. No.	Tender No. and Date	Category	No. of items
1.	KMSCL/ED/ACD/RC/2024/001 dtd. 05.01.2024	Anti Cancer Drugs	127

The last date and time of online uploading of tender will be 22.01.2024, 5.00 pm. The date and time of opening of Technical bid will be 25.01.2024 11.00 am. Tender shall be downloaded and submitted online through the e-tender portal **www.etenders.kerala.gov.in**.

(Sd/-) MANAGING DIRECTOR (Tender Inviting Authority)

ॐ
KACHCHI MOODOOR
ARCHAKAS WELFARE TRUST
Regd. Office: 'Kamadhenu', No. 16, Second Main Road,
Kottur Gardens, Chennai - 600 085, India
Ph: +91-44-24471936 E-mail: kmawt1@gmail.com
Website: www.kmawt.org

SREE MAHALAKSHMYAI NAMAHA
SREE CHANDRASEKARA GURUBHYO NAMAHA

APPEAL

The MAHASWAMI OF KANCHI ordained this Public Charitable Trust in 1986 for providing financial aid to Archakas who live in poor conditions, upholding our religious and cultural heritage in ancient temples in rural areas. Many of them do not have any means of sustenance and we should deem it our duty to provide them with minimal financial aid to ensure that they continue to perform their important role in the rural communities.

MAHA PERIYAVA had instructed that the Trust should seek donations primarily from individual devotees; and provide financial assistance to these Archakas from the income derived from investing the donations. He had further desired that those with gross income of over Rs. 4,000/- per month could contribute their one month's gross income.

The Trust currently provides a monthly honorarium to 473 poor Archakas, (169 Poojaries, 137 Bhattacharyas and 167 Sivacharyas) spread over rural Tamil Nadu. The Trust also has a Group Life Insurance Policy for the benefit of eligible Archakas.

We earnestly request all the devotees to donate liberally for this noble cause, keeping in mind **MAHA PERIYAVA's** desire. By His Grace and the generous contribution from his devotees, it has been possible to enhance the monthly honorarium progressively to **Rs. 2,600/- (Rupees Two Thousand Six Hundred only) per month.** However, with the increasing number of beneficiaries and reduction in the interest rates, it is necessary to enhance the Corpus fund significantly to maintain the current level of financial aid to the poor Archakas.

Online Donations to Corpus Fund can be made through our website: www.kmawt.org.

Also, Crossed Cheque or Demand Draft payable at Chennai drawn in favour of **'KACHCHI MOODOOR ARCHAKAS WELFARE TRUST'** can be sent to the Trust office. Please do mention that the donation is towards **CORPUS FUND** in the covering letter, and do include Donor's Name, PAN number, Address, Cell/Phone Number, and Email-Id (if available).

Please note that Income Tax Section 80G Benefit is available to the Donors.

08.01.2024

S. RAGHUNATHAN
Advocate, Chennai
Chairman

TRUSTEES

1. Sri R. Subramanian, Chennai
2. Sri M.D. Gopal, Dubai
3. Sri S. Chandrasekar, Chennai
4. Sri Prakash R. Bhat, Hony. Secretary & Treasurer

INBRIEF

India reports 756 new COVID cases, five virus-related deaths

India has recorded 756 new cases of COVID, while the number of active cases of the infection stood at 4,049, the Union Health Ministry said on Sunday. Five deaths - two each from Kerala and Maharashtra and one from Jammu and Kashmir - have been reported in 24 hours, according to the Ministry's data. The number of daily cases began to increase after the emergence of the new variant JN.1 and cold weather. Of the total active cases, around 92% are recovering under home isolation. "The currently available data suggest that the JN.1 variant is neither leading to an exponential rise in new cases nor a surge in hospitalisation and mortality," sources said. PTI

PMO imposter case: CBI files chargesheet against accused

The Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) has filed a chargesheet against Ahmedabad-based Mayank Tiwari who allegedly posed as a high-ranking official of the Prime Minister's Office to force the Dr. Agarwal's eye hospital chain to forfeit more than ₹16 crore owed to it by an Indore-based hospital under a legal dispute, according to officials. After a nearly three-month investigation, the CBI filed the first chargesheet in the case in a special CBI court in New Delhi. In October, the agency had carried out searches at several locations, including Ahmedabad and Indore, during which a number of documents were seized by officials. PTI

Tribes in Chhattisgarh subjected to 'atrocities under tribal CM': Congress

Opposition party vows to take anti-mining protest over deforestation in Hasdeo region to the Assembly; key demand of the protesters include cancellation of Parsa coal block and commitment from BJP govt. not to touch 2,000 sq. km forest land

Shubhomoy Sikdar
RAIPUR

Taking part in an anti-mining protest in Chhattisgarh's Surguja district on Sunday, State Congress president Deepak Baij said "atrocities on tribals" are being committed under a tribal Chief Minister in the State.

With the Lok Sabha election on the horizon, a mining-related deforestation exercise in Hasdeo forests last month has reignited protests and triggered a debate between the BJP, which recently assumed power, and the Congress over who should be held responsible.

In Hariharpur villlage of Surguja district, the protest site on Sunday, an indefinite sit-in has been going on for over two years now.

People's power: In Hariharpur villlage of Surguja district, an indefinite sit-in protest has been going on for over two years over deforestation owing to mining in the area. SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

'Tribal at the helm'

"A tribal amongst us is in power in Chhattisgarh, but regrettably, it is during the tenure of the tribal Chief Minister that most atrocities have been committed on tribals," said Mr. Baij, referring to Chief Minister Vishnu Deo Sai.

Extending his party's support to the protests, Mr. Baij drew parallels between coal mining in the northern tribal belt of Surguja and iron ore mining in the southern tribal belt of Bastar, where he hails from.

The Congress leader added that on the one hand, there was the "Hasdeo" (forest) and on the other, there was "Vishnu Deo" and that his party would take these protests from the streets to the Assembly.

The protest in the area saw participation by Chhattisgarh Bachao Andolan (CBA), Hasdeo Bachao Sangharsh Samiti, Sanyukt Kisan Morcha, Chhattisgarh Kranti Sena and Johar Chhattisgarh party among others.

The key demand of the anti-mining protesters include cancellation of Parsa coal block and a commitment from the ruling Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) government that it would not touch an area of 2,000 sq. km declared as Lemru forest reserve by the previous Congress government.

Alok Shukla of the CBA said that they have also been asking for an investigation on the three "forged Gram Sabha resolutions" which the government had not initiated despite a letter by a former Governor of Chhattisgarh.

"Due to this, officially, 2.50 lakh trees will be cut in near future and unofficially this number could be 3-4 lakh. The environmental impact of this will be irreversible as per the Wildlife Institute of India [WII]," said Mr. Shukla.

Affecting water levels

Elaborating on the impact of mining, he said that due to deforestation, the water levels in Hasdeo river and Hasdeo Bango Mini Mata dam would deplete, which in turn would have a cascading effect elsewhere too.

"The water from the dam irrigates over four lakh hectares of land. Further, the felling will affect wildlife and endangered species. Further, elephant-human conflict will worsen," Mr. Shukla added.

When felling of trees for mining in Parsa East Kete Basan (PEKB) Phase-II project was under way last month, the Assembly was in session and the Congress had raised the issue there, but Mr. Sai retorted that it was under the previous Congress government [2018-23] in the State that the permissions were issued.

Over 1.75 lakh pilgrims can go on annual Haj from India

Press Trust of India
JEDDAH

India and Saudi Arabia on Sunday signed a bilateral agreement under which New Delhi has been allocated a quota of 1,75,025 pilgrims for the annual Haj pilgrimage in 2024.

Union Minority Affairs Minister Smriti Irani, accompanied by Minister of State for External Affairs V. Muraleedharan, signed the Bilateral Haj Agreement, 2024 with the Saudi Minister of Haj and Umrah, Tawfiq bin Fawzan in Jeddah.

According to an official statement, a total quota of 1,75,025 pilgrims from India has been finalised for 2024 with 1,40,020 seats reserved for pilgrims to proceed through Haj Committee whereas 35,005 pilgrims have permission to proceed through private operators.

"Pleased to announce the formalisation of the Bilateral Haj Agreement 2024 between India and Saudi Arabia. I, along with Hon'ble MoS for External Affairs, Shri @MOS_MEA, presided over the signing. Also engaged in productive discussions on matters of mutual interest with @tfrabiah, Saudi Minister of Haj and Umrah Affairs," Ms. Irani said in a post on X.

In a first, IAF C-130 with Garud commandos makes night landing at Kargil

The Hindu Bureau
NEW DELHI

In the icy heights: A view of the IAF C-130 transport aircraft landing at night at the Kargil Advanced Landing Ground in Ladakh. IAF

In a first, a C-130 Super Hercules tactical transport aircraft of the Indian Air Force made a night landing at the Advanced Landing Ground (ALG) in Kargil close to the Line of Control (LoC) with Pakistan along with a team of Garud special forces.

"In a first, an IAF C-130J aircraft recently carried out a night landing at the Kargil airstrip. Employing terrain masking *en route*, the exercise also dovetailed a training mission of the Garuds," the IAF said in a social media post.

Earlier, transport aircraft landed here during daytime, one official said. Explaining the significance, the official said the ALG was located at an altitude of around 10,000 feet and was a restricted airstrip with a unidirectional approach surrounded by rough terrain. It does not have night-landing facilities. This demonstrates the capability to carry out specialised missions round the clock in this area, the official said.

The Kargil ALG is also significant because this is the only airstrip in this area critical for any exigency. In Jammu and Kashmir, the IAF has full-fledged airfields at Srinagar, Awantipora, Udhampur and Jammu. In Ladakh, the IAF has airfields at Leh and Thoise and ALGs at Nyoma, Fukche and Daulat Beg Oldi (DBO).

In the past decade, the Defence Ministry has reactivated a series of ALGs close to the border, especially along the Line of Actual Control with China.

With flexible courses, IITs open doors for students studying in far-flung areas of India

Maitri Porecha
NEW DELHI

Studying in an Indian Institute of Technology (IIT) is usually considered aspirational for students from colleges in Tier-2 or -3 towns. Five IITs – Ropar, Guwahati, Mandi, Patna and Kanpur – are now set to change this notion.

For the academic year 2024-25, students studying in such colleges can also get an IIT tag by opting for a minor specialisation, a diploma or a Bachelor's or a Master's degree, which will be offered in partnership with the National Skill Development Corporation (NSDC) and these IITs, NSDC Chief Executive Officer Ved Mani Tiwari told *The Hindu*.

"IITs have opened their doors to those who want to pursue a short-term skilling programme through Pradhan Mantri Kaushal Vikas schemes or an Industrial Training Institute (ITI) student who will like to pursue a certificate or diploma programme from the IITs. All the skilling programmes will be facilitated via Skill India Digital platform," Mr. Tiwari said.

New vistas: The courses are offered in partnership with the National Skill Development Corporation (NSDC). PTI

The courses will work on a credit-based system, where a minor specialisation from the IIT will entail taking 10 to 18 credits. "While the core degree will be awarded by the instituting university to which the college is affiliated, there will be a mention of minor specialisation from IIT," he said.

In a four-year undergraduate degree programe, 160 credits would be required to receive a Bachelor of Science degree from an IIT. "Out of total 160 credits, it is proposed to deliver skill component of 18 credits through Skill India Digital (SID) via a strategic delivery partner," Mr. Tiwari added.

Also, for garnering an executive M.Tech., the student will have to complete 62 credits, out of which 12 credits of skill component are proposed to be delivered on the SID portal of NSDC through its strategic delivery partner.

For instance, in the tripartite partnership between IIT-Patna, NSDC and Teamlease, they have collaborated for a three-year degree programme – Bachelor of Computer Application (BCA). It is a 155-credit programme of which 146 academic credits shall be provided by the IIT-Patna, and nine credits (three per year) shall be covered through the skill-based programmes offered in collaboration between NSDC and Teamlease.

As per provisions of the National Education Policy (NEP), all programmes have been designed with provision of multiple entry and exit options.

"Any student enrolled under four-year online UG programme will have the option to exit with a foundational certificate after first year, diploma in the second year, Bachelor's degree in third year and Honours degree in fourth year," Mr. Tiwari said.

For the two-year executive M.Tech., he said that students who enrol in a 12-month PG diploma programme can further extend the course to obtain the Master's degree from the IIT after completion of the diploma.

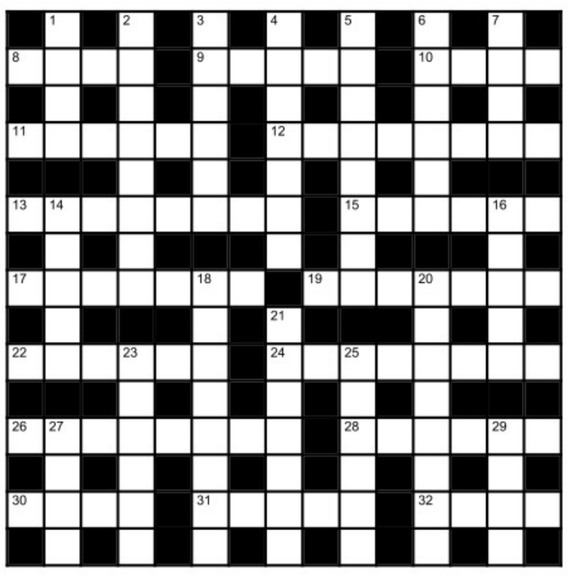
In addition, candidates will have an option to take up the 12-month PG diploma and opt out without going for the M.Tech. course. The students choosing to opt out after the first semester of PG Diploma will have an option to exit with a PG certification.

TH CROSSWORD + 14066

(set by Incognito)

To solve this puzzle online, get across to our crossword site. @ *https://qrgo.page.link/jjpTn*

SCAN TO PLAY



Across

8 A group of similar people, perhaps, compete to ascertain one with fastest speed (4)
9 Liquid available in Ottawa Terminal (5)
10 Top animal gets cross (4)
11 Effect on non-Indian insult (6)
12 Last condiment (4,4)
13 How a bespectacled person might look? Awkwardly? How silly! (8)
15 Pilot officer manufactured ointment (6)
17 Make a man of cloth give up his habit? (7)
19 Male child carries list for some cheese (7)
22 Small piece of furniture is steady (6)
24 Wallowing pigs ruin rebellion (8)
26 They too run after English canine (3,5)
28 Some parts of very pleasant city (6)
30 Monster squashing orange after discarding central portion (4)
31 Possibly least unit of magnetic flux density (5)
32 Young lady from "Admissions" (4)

Down

1 Wan friend has energy (4)
2 Odd! Parent without ward accepts convoluted clue by setter (8)
3 Change stick (6)
4 Floors Yankee behind shop on Sunday (7)
5 Stupid person's top (8)
6 Managed to some extent some money for payment to criminal (6)
7 Who invented the telephone? Engineer and two students! (4)
14 When bird goes away, raise temperature and produce grain (5)
16 Doctor's personal sink (5)
18 Cigars having revolutionary origins? (8)
20 Wrongly laments about a final title (4,4)
21 Titled lady and a couple of learners left dull game (7)
23 Gambler is improving (6)
25 Show endlessly "Red Meat", perhaps (6)
27 Yes, Goa organised Indian activity for physical and mental well-being (4)
29 Charlie has distributed money (4)

SUDOKU

4		9					5	
6			9			2		
5	7		8		2	6		
2	5							
			2		6			
							8	2
		3	6		5		2	7
		2			7			1
	8					9		3

DIFFICULTY RATING: ★★☆☆☆

No.SS6032 Distribution: www.knightfeatures.com

Solution to previous puzzle

	I		S		U		L		M		U		C	
G	R	I	T		S	T	A	T	I	O	N	A	R	Y
	R		U		E		M		N		U		A	
D	I	E	T	E	D		B	L	O	S	S	O	M	S
	T		T		T				T		E			
T	A	P	E	W	O	R	M		A	N	D	R	E	W
	T		R				O		U				L	
K	I	S	S		O	S	C	A	R		I	T	E	M
	O						V		H			N	C	
U	N	S	A	F	E			A	P	P	O	S	I	T	E
			B		R				A		O		O	
C	O	L	O	S	S	A	L		R	U	L	E	R	S
	V		A		E		A		E		E		A	
R	E	C	R	E	A	T	I	O	N		N	O	T	E
	N		D		S		R		T		T		E	

Solution to yesterday's Sudoku

2	9	6	4	5	3	7	8	1
7	3	1	6	2	8	5	4	9
8	4	5	9	1	7	3	2	6
1	7	2	8	4	9	6	3	5
6	8	3	5	7	1	4	9	2
4	5	9	2	3	6	1	7	8
3	2	7	1	9	5	8	6	4
9	1	8	7	6	4	2	5	3
5	6	4	3	8	2	9	1	7

FAITH

Indefatigable Periya Nambi

It is said that in order to usher in good things to benefit man, the entire universe will conspire if need be. This is very true of the Pancha Samskaram of Acharya Ramanuja.

Vaishnava Acharyas such as Alavandhar had the inner vision to identify lofty souls. The minute he spotted a young Ramanuja in Kancheepuram, he knew the boy was slated for greater things. He prayed to Lord Varadaraja that Ramanuja come to him and be formally initiated, said Thirukkudanthai Dr. Venkatesh. As the challenges around him grew, Alavandhar never forgot his mission to initiate Ramanuja and sent Periya Nambi to Kanchi to fetch him. Men of God have a way of approaching things: Nambi simply recited a verse from Alavandhar 's Stotra Ratnam. Moved by it, Ramanuja immediately expressed a desire to meet its author. On hearing it was Alavandhar, who had not heard of him, agreed to journey to Sriangam. However, it was too late, Alavandhar had attained Vaikuntam. A disappointed Ramanuja returned to Kanchi. Years passed, Periya Nambi never forgot his acharya's desire to initiate Ramanuja and decided to perform it himself. Meanwhile, Lord Varadaraja instructs Ramanuja to receive Pancha Samskaram in Srirangam. Thus, both journey towards each other and meet at Eri Katha Ramar temple in Maduranthakam. Periya Nambi initiates Ramanuja there.

Simplify process of investment

COVERNOTE

Financial decisions are hard. Paperwork should not be so; nominations, change of address, linking of Aadhaar, linking of PAN, making nominations can all be time consuming and painful

K. Nitya Kalyani

In a departure from our usual CoverNote topic of insurance, let me air some rants about the paperwork and processes in the management of investments. The time to review tax and investments for tax planning is towards the end of the financial year.

I take the opportunity to check if nominations are in place, whether any change of address, contact information and so on are needed.

These things can easily be forgotten and will come back to bite one in the ankle later.

Step one: Check insurance policies, various accounts – savings bank, securities, demat and trading, pension and so on – to see if contact information is current and accurate.

Relevant forms

Call your bank or investment advisor or locate your service providers' websites and get hold of the relevant forms.

The same goes for KYC. Regardless of whether the institutions remind you or not, or whether you are getting a load of fake SMSes threatening you to update your KYC or not, do check each account and investment to see if any re-KYC is pending viz. if Aadhaar linking is required, if PAN linking is required and so on.

It will save you loads of time and grief at a later time when you may have to do these but not at leisure or in emotional comfort.

Then comes the biggie – nomination. Right now, there is a sustained campaign to nominate all your financial investments or sign an undertaking that you don't wish to make a nomination. It's a good move to focus the investors' minds.

A person who could otherwise put it off is now forced to sign on the dotted line owning up the responsibility for not nominating.

Forms, processes

What about the rants? They are mainly of three categories. Forms, processes and redundancy. Here is a sneak preview.

Each institution gives out a different nomination form. And, there are different forms for nomination and renomination (that's for when you change your mind about giving your FD proceeds to one child and want to give it to another!)

Everyone, of course, needs your personal and contact information and those of the nominee/s. Some need the nominees to sign the form and want their KYC documents as well.

So, you have to wait for the child who lives abroad to come to India and time your nomination paperwork accordingly. We are only scratching the surface.

CoverNote will be back with more hair-raising nomination adventures.

(The writer is a business journalist specialising in insurance & corporate history)

Send queries on personal finance and investing to the moneywise@thehindu.co.in ID. Our experts in personal finance will respond to select queries, but will not give specific recommendations for investment in a particular mutual fund, share or fixed deposit.

Popular tool: Industry estimates show EMIs contributed to rising credit penetration — from 15% in 2017 to 21% in 2020. GETTY IMAGES/ISTOCK

The EMI-sation way – credit now comes in a sachet

Post COVID, when consumers were constrained by many factors, debit card EMI transactions, no-cost EMIs turned a hit, more than tripling in transactional volumes in July '21 vs. Feb. '20

CREDIT CHOICE

Amit Pathak

"You're gonna be, a shinin' star In fancy clothes, and fancy cars And then, you'll see, you're gonna go far. So, live your life..."

Indian consumers seem to be singing Rihanna's popular tune loud and clear this festive season and determined to get whatever they want to live their life. And, why not? Thanks to the financially-attractive Equated Monthly Instalment (EMI) offers on almost everything on sale, they are making India literally an EMI-nation.

Transformative tools

In a financial sense, EMI is a transformative financial tool allowing customers to divide the total price of a purchase into fixed monthly instalments over a period, making it affordable and convenient to pay. For merchants, it means higher sales, more loyal customers and transactional value and lower risks.

Why EMI-sation? EMIs raise affordability as customers tend to buy larger-ticket items more often due to the convenience. Often compared with the sachet revolution in the FMCG sector a few decades earlier, the EMIs on debit or credit cards have helped the overall consumption growth in India's vast semi-urban and rural areas. From buying a holiday or getting a cosmetic surgery or purchasing a 75-inch TV

> Affordability has been made possible by white-goods makers, e-com firms and others offering products, services on EMIs

or iPhone 15, customers are no longer holding back desires. For banks, it helps they are offering EMI products largely to a set of pre-approved customers only to mitigate credit risk.

According to a survey, many say it even facilitates financial planning goals on a monthly basis as it gives flexibility to manage unforeseen expenditure or financial emergencies. Also, the role of EMIs in imparting primary lessons on financial literacy is something not much discussed about. Since customers need to provide for monthly instalments, it goads them into getting better credit score, thus improving credit inclusion.

Industry estimates show EMIs have contributed to rising credit penetration – from 15% in 2017 to 21% in 2020. Also, EMI users had greater credit awareness, checked credit score regularly and possessed better repayment behaviour with lower delinquency rates.

COVID-fuelled EMIs

The trend that has been capaciously visible since COVID-19 days has hit a new peak now, official data and private research show. In the immediate aftermath

> In a country with a significant proportion of youth, affordability has been the tipping point for kindling the EMI revolution

of COVID, when consumers were constrained by several factors, debit card EMI transactions and no-cost EMI offers became an instant hit, posting a phenomenal 220% growth in transactional volumes in July 2021 vs. February 2020. Then came the interest rate increases by the RBI which turned customers away from outright purchases. Sustained inflation also made the case for easier financing tools.

Thus, the scenario since 2019 had helped propel the rapid journey towards 'affordability solutions' which eventually lifted the customers' purchasing power and confidence.

Boosting growth

According to estimates, India will witness a 50% growth in online shopping in the next three years to touch 30 crore users by FY26 as innovations around EMI offers have given enough confidence to those new to credit.

The awareness-induced change in customer behaviour is very evident. Today, they demand EMI options for any product or service costing ₹10,000 and above. We are also seeing trends where customers are clear about the next product to be purchased on EMI, when 2-3 instalments of the existing product are left to be paid.

Generational shift seems to be another key element in this upturn. The shift, in a way, has been ably aided by financial influencers contributing by creating awareness on benefits of prudent credit consumption and investing available capital for healthy returns.

In a country which has a significant percentage of youth among its demographic profile with information and access to the best of products and services in the world, affordability has been the tipping point needed to kindle the EMI revolution.

Affordability has also been made possible by white-goods makers, e-com firms and others wanting to offer products or services on EMIs, partnering banks to create a financially-attractive proposition. Consequently, these brands saw pick-up in sales on a new base of customers flocking to them.

In a consumption-driven economy like India, EMIs will continue to play a major role in growth. Research shows consumer lending is on a major upswing and EMIs account for a significant part of it. Here, digital channels have a big role in disbursing timely credit and lenders in offering innovative and personalised EMI solutions.

(The writer is Business Head - Consumer Finance, Kotak Mahindra Bank Ltd.)

Understand compound returns

THINKINVESTOR

Start saving early and wait patiently for compounding of returns to take effect, argued the author of an audio book; This argument may not always work well for your goal-based investments

Venkatesh Bangaruswamy

Start saving early and wait patiently for compounding of returns to take effect, argued the author of an audio book that I was listening to recently. This may not work well for goal-based investments. Here, we discuss two reasons why this may be the case – time-bound objectives and asymmetric returns.

Compounding pain?

You save and invest to accumulate wealth to achieve a goal. Now, goals have finite time horizon. It is true you should start early to achieve a goal. That way, compounding can work. But, it is highly unlikely you will know well in advance what goals you want to pursue, except for two primary goals – funding child's college education and, perhaps, retirement. Starting early is, hence, difficult for goal-based investments.

Suppose at 28 you decide you want to buy a house five years hence. You could start saving from next month, but have only five years to accumulate enough wealth to make the down payment. So, the argument you should wait patiently for compounding to take effect does not hold water for a time-bound objective.

There is another issue. Compounding of return helps for bond investments (read bank deposits), as interest rates are typically positive. Consider the rule of 72. If your bank deposit pays 6% a year, it will take about 12 years for money to double (divide 72 by 6). But negative compounding hurts badly. Why? Suppose you must earn 12% each year on equity investments to achieve the goal. A negative return experience means you must recover not only the unrealised losses but also earn 12% return required to achieve the goal. Imagine the impact on your investments if you face consecutive years of negative returns. Compounding of returns may not be always helpful for investments earning capital appreciation.

Conclusion

The above arguments do not mean you can't benefit from compounding of returns. There are two specific cases when compounding reduces investment anxiety.

Suppose you have accumulated only 65% of the required wealth in your retirement portfolio at 50. Based on the rule of 72 (using post-tax returns), you can still hope to achieve the goal in the last ten years of your working life, assuming you retire at 60. The other instance is when you are saving to accumulate wealth with no time-bound objective.

(The author offers training programmes for individuals to manage their personal investments)

Bank Fixed Deposit Rates

Bank Name	Interest Rates (%) Highest Slab	1-year Tenure	3-year Tenure	5-year Tenure
Small Finance Banks				
AU Small Finance Bank	8.00	6.75	8.00	7.25
Capital Small Finance Bank	7.60	7.50	7.15	7.10
Equitas Small Finance Bank	8.50	8.20	8.00	7.25
ESAF Small Finance Bank	8.25	6.00	6.75	6.25
Fincare Small Finance Bank	8.61	7.65	8.11	8.00
Jana Small Finance Bank	8.50	8.50	7.25	7.25
Suryoday Small Finance Bank	8.65	6.85	8.60	8.25
Ujjivan Small Finance Bank	8.25	8.25	7.20	7.20
Utkarsh Small Finance Bank	8.50	8.00	8.50	7.50
Private Sector Banks				
Axis Bank	7.10	6.70	7.10	7.00
Bandhan Bank	7.85	7.25	7.25	5.85
City Union Bank	7.00	6.75	6.50	6.25
CSB Bank	7.75	5.00	5.75	5.75
DBS Bank	7.50	7.00	6.50	6.50
Federal Bank	7.50	6.80	7.00	6.60
HDFC Bank	7.20	6.60	7.00	7.00
ICICI Bank	7.10	6.70	7.00	7.00
IDFC First Bank	7.75	6.50	7.25	7.00
IndusInd Bank	7.50	7.50	7.25	7.25
Jammu & Kashmir Bank	7.10	7.10	6.50	6.50
Karnataka Bank	7.25	6.95	6.50	6.50
Karur Vysya Bank	7.50	7.00	7.00	6.50
Kotak Mahindra Bank	7.25	7.10	7.00	6.20
RBL Bank	8.00	7.50	7.50	7.10
SBM Bank India	7.75	7.05	7.30	7.75
South Indian Bank	7.40	6.70	6.60	6.00
Tamilnad Mercantile	7.00	7.00	6.50	6.50
Public Sector Banks				
Bank of Baroda	7.25	6.85	7.25	6.50
Bank of India	7.25	6.50	6.50	6.00
Bank of Maharashtra	7.00	6.50	6.25	6.00
Canara Bank	7.25	6.85	6.80	6.70
Central Bank of India	7.15	6.75	6.50	6.25
Indian Bank	7.25	6.10	6.25	6.25
Indian Overseas Bank	7.10	6.80	6.50	6.50
Punjab National Bank	7.25	6.75	7.00	6.50
Punjab & Sind Bank	7.40	6.20	6.00	6.00
State Bank of India	7.10	6.80	6.75	6.50
Union Bank of India	7.25	6.75	6.50	6.50
Foreign Banks				
Standard Chartered Bank	7.50	7.15	7.10	6.75

Home Loan Interest Rates

Name of Lender	Loan Amount (Rs.) Upto 30 lakh	Above 30 lakh & upto 75 lakh	Above 75 lakh
			(In %)
Public Sector Banks			
State Bank of India	8.40-10.15	8.40-10.05	8.40-10.05
Bank of Baroda	8.40-10.65	8.40-10.65	8.40-10.90
Union Bank of India	8.35-10.75	8.35-10.90	8.35-10.90
Punjab National Bank	8.45-10.25	8.40-10.15	8.40-10.15
Bank of India	8.30-10.75	8.30-10.75	8.30-10.75
Canara Bank	8.50-11.25	8.45-11.25	8.40-11.15
UCO Bank	8.45-10.30	8.45-10.30	8.45-10.30
Bank of Maharashtra	8.35-11.15	8.35-11.15	8.35-11.15
Punjab and Sind Bank	8.50-10.00	8.50-10.00	8.50-10.00
Indian Overseas Bank	8.40*	8.40*	8.40*
Central Bank of India	8.45-9.80	8.45-9.80	8.45-9.80
Private Sector Banks			
Kotak Mahindra Bank	8.70*	8.70*	8.70*
ICICI Bank	8.75*	8.75*	8.75*
Axis Bank	8.70-13.30	8.70-13.30	8.70-9.10
HSBC Bank	8.45*	8.45*	8.45*
South Indian Bank	9.57-10.97	9.57-10.77	9.57-11.42
Karur Vysya Bank	9.23-10.73	9.23-10.73	9.23-10.73
Karnataka Bank	8.58-10.58	8.58-10.58	8.58-10.58
Federal Bank	8.80*	8.80*	8.80*
Dhanlaxmi Bank	9.35-10.50	9.35-10.50	9.35-10.50
Tamilnad Mercantile Bank	9.45-9.95	9.45-9.95	9.45-9.95
Bandhan Bank	9.16-15.00	9.16-13.33	9.16-13.33
RBL Bank	8.90*	8.90*	8.90*
CSB Bank	10.69-12.54	10.69-12.54	10.69-12.54
HDFC Bank	8.35*	8.35*	8.35*
City Union Bank	12.35 - 14.10	12.85 - 14.60	13.35 - 14.85
Housing Finance Companies (HFCs)			
LIC Housing Finance	8.40-10.35	8.40-10.55	8.40-10.75
Bajaj Housing Finance	8.50*	8.50*	8.50*
Tata Capital	8.70*	8.70*	8.70*
PNB Housing Finance	8.50-14.50	8.50-14.50	8.50-11.45
GIC Housing Finance	8.80*	8.80*	8.80*
SMFG India Home Finance	10.50*	10.50*	10.50*
Aditya Birla Capital	8.80-14.75	8.80-14.75	8.80-14.75
ICICI Home Finance	9.20*	9.20*	9.20*
Godrej Housing Finance	8.55*	8.55*	8.55*

*Onwards. Rates as on January 3 Source:Paisabazaar.com

LJUBLANJA

Five trapped in Slovenia since Saturday as rainwater floods cave

AP

Five persons have been trapped in a cave in central Slovenia since Saturday after heavy rain caused flooding. A family of three adults with two guides were trapped when they began a tourist visit to the Krizna Jama (Cross Cave), some 50 km south of the capital Ljubljana on Saturday morning. AFP

SHANGHAI

China sanctions five U.S. firms following arms sales to Taiwan

AP

China announced sanctions against five U.S. defence firms in response to their involvement in arms sales to self-ruled Taiwan, which Beijing claims as part of its territory. Last month, the U.S. State Department had approved a $300-million arms package to strengthen Taipei's joint battle command and control system. AFP

TOKYO

Japan ruling party MP held as part of first arrests over fund scandal

AFP

Japanese prosecutors on Sunday made the first arrests in a funding scandal that forced Prime Minister Fumio Kishida to replace four Ministers last month. Ruling party lawmaker Yoshitaka Ikeda, 57, was held on suspicion of violating the political funds control law. He is suspected of receiving kickbacks of around 48 million yen. AFP

COX'S BAZAR

Fire at Bangladesh Rohingya camp guts more than 1,000 shelters

AFP

A fire raced through a crammed camp of Rohingya refugees in Bangladesh's southern coastal district of Cox's Bazar, gutting more than 1,000 shelters and leaving thousands homeless. The fire broke out around midnight on Saturday at Kutupalong camp and spread quickly, fanned by strong winds. No casualties were reported. AP

Two Israelis, 9 Palestinians killed in West Bank violence

Agence France-Presse
RAMALLAH

An air strike, gunfire and explosives across the West Bank killed eight Palestinians and two Israelis on Sunday, officials on both sides said as violence surges in the occupied territory.

Seven Palestinians were killed in an Israeli air strike in Jenin refugee camp, a militant stronghold in the northern West Bank. An Israeli woman officer was killed during a raid on the camp.

Three-year-old killed

The Israeli police said that officers responding to a car-ramming attack at a checkpoint in the occupied West Bank shot a three-year-old Palestinian girl.

A Palestinian man was killed by Israeli Army fire in Abwein village north of Ramallah.

Israeli Army wraps up major combat in northern Gaza

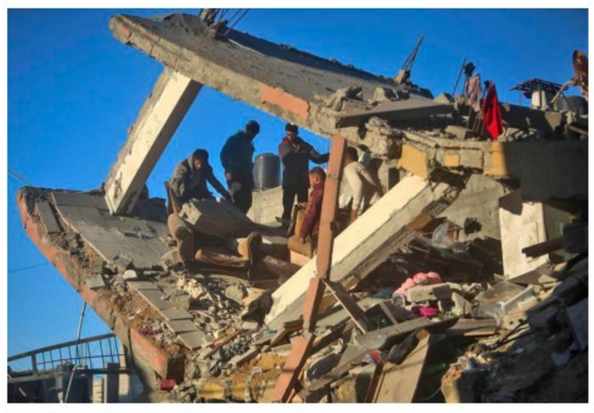
Air strike in southern city of Rafah kills two journalists; going forward, Israel to focus on central and southern parts of the enclave; Antony Blinken visits Qatar, one of the key mediator countries

Associated Press
JERUSALEM

The Israeli military signalled that it has wrapped up major combat in northern Gaza, saying it has completed dismantling Hamas's military infrastructure there, as the war against the militant group entered its fourth month on Sunday.

Israel did not address troop deployments in northern Gaza going forward. Military spokesman Rear Adm. Daniel Hagari said late on Saturday that forces would focus on the central and southern parts of the territory and strengthen defences along the Israel-Gaza border fence.

The announcement came ahead of a visit to Israel by U.S. Secretary of State Antony Blinken, who on Sunday was in Qatar, a key mediator.



Tumbled structure: Palestinians inspect damage on a destroyed house in Khan Younis in Gaza Strip on Sunday. AP

In recent weeks, Israel has scaled back its military assault in northern Gaza and pressed its offensive in the south, where most of Gaza's 2.3 million Palestinians are squeezed into smaller areas in a humanitarian disaster while being pounded by Israeli airstrikes.

The war was triggered by Hamas' October 7 attack on southern Israel in which the militants killed about 1,200 people, mostly civilians, and took some 250 people hostage. Israel's retaliation has killed more than 22,800 Palestinians and wounded more than 58,000.

An airstrike near the southern city of Rafah killed two journalists, including Hamza Dahdouh, the oldest son of Wael Dahdouh, Al Jazeera's chief correspondent in Gaza.

Al Jazeera strongly condemned the killings and other "brutal attacks against journalists and their families" by Israeli forces, and urged the International Criminal Court, governments and human rights groups to hold Israel accountable.

Dahdouh previously lost his wife, two children and a grandchild in an October 26 airstrike, and was wounded in an Israeli strike last month that killed a co-worker.

South Korea accuses North of firing shells for third day

Associated Press
SEOUL

South Korea accused North Korea of firing artillery shells near their tense sea boundary for a third straight day on Sunday, as the influential sister of North Korean leader Kim Jong-un mocked the South's ability to detect its weapons launches.

South Korea's Joint Chiefs of Staff dismissed Kim Yo Jong's statement as "a comedy-like, vulgar propaganda" meant to undermine the South Korean people's trust in the military and stoke divisions.

The Joint Chiefs of Staff said North Korea fired more than more than 90 rounds near the rivals' disputed western sea boundary on Sunday afternoon. It said South Korea strongly urges North Korea to halt provocative acts or face an overwhelming, stern response.

South Korea's military earlier said North Korea fired more than 60 rounds on Saturday, a day after launching more than 200 shells. North Korea acknowledged it performed artillery firings on Friday but said it did not fire a single round on Saturday. The North hasn't commented on its reported firings on Sunday.

Constant provocation: North Korea fired more than 90 rounds towards South Korea's western sea boundary on Sunday. AP

Kim's sister's remark

Kim Yo Jong said earlier on Sunday that North Korea on Saturday only detonated blasting powder simulating the sound of its coastal artillery on the seashore, to test the South Korean military's detection capabilities.

"The result was clear as we expected. They misjudged the blasting sound as the sound of gunfire and conjectured it as a provocation. And they even made a false and impudent statement that the shells dropped north" of the sea boundary, Kim Yo Jong said.

Regulators across the world order inspections on Boeing MAX-9 planes

Agence France-Presse
WASHINGTON

Airlines and safety bodies around the world grounded some versions of the Boeing 737 MAX-9 jets pending inspections on Sunday, with dozens of flights cancelled over the weekend after a panel blew out of one of the planes over the western U.S. State of Oregon.

The Federal Aviation Administration in the U.S. "is requiring immediate inspections of certain Boeing 737 MAX-9 planes before they can return to flight," the agency said. It added that around 171 aircraft worldwide would be affected, with each inspection taking four to eight hours.

Alaska and United Airlines fly the largest number of MAX-9 planes, while Turkish Airlines has a smaller fleet.

As of Sunday, all three airlines had grounded their jets for inspection.

Boeing has so far delivered about 218 of the 737 MAX planes worldwide.

Aeromexico said it was grounding all of its 737 MAX-9 planes while inspections were carried out, and Turkish Airlines announced that it would also suspend flights of five MAX-9 planes for checks.

Panamanian carrier Copa Airlines said it was grounding 21 of its 737 MAX-9s, while Icelandair said none of its 737 MAX-9's featured the plane configuration specified in the FAA grounding order.

The European Union's Aviation Safety Agency (EASA) said it would follow the FAA's directive, but that it doesn't believe that any EU airlines currently operate the 737 MAX-9.

Singapore Airlines said it was also not affected because it does not fly the model.

Boeing has struggled in recent years with technical and quality control issues related to its 737 MAX models.

Air strike on Myanmar village kills 15, as junta battles rebels across country

Agence France-Presse
BANGKOK

At least 15 persons, including children, have been killed in an air strike on a village in northwestern Myanmar, local media said on Sunday.

The country has been engulfed by increasingly vicious fighting, with the junta battling opponents in the north and the east.

The strike hit a village in Khampat Township, Tamu district, at around 10:15 am (0945 IST). Local media outlets put the death toll at 15 persons, including children, with 20 wounded.

More victims suspected

But two witnesses – a man and a woman who asked to remain anonymous for safety – said the toll was higher.

"19 persons were killed, including eight children," said the man, who said he saw a junta fighterjet overhead during the time of the attack.

He said the first bombs targeted two churches in the village, and a second attack came as people fled the buildings.

"Most of them were killed outside the church area as they were running to escape," he said.

Women and children were among those killed in the attack, which was made more deadly because of the crowds, he said. In total the jet dropped six bombs, he added.

"They targeted the two churches, but bombs hit outside the two churches, and hit some houses," he said.

Another device landed near the community's school, he added.

The village is under the control of a People's Defence Force (PDF) group, one of many that have sprung up to fight the junta.

The military has designated the groups as "terrorists".

Sport

Dakar Rally: Branch tops Stage 1 for Hero MotoSports

Press Trust of India
AL HENAKIYAH

Hero MotoSports Team Rally made a strong start to the Dakar Rally as its rider Ross Branch topped the opening stage of the iconic off-roading event. In total, three Hero riders crossed Saturday's finish line successfully, with Branch finishing first among 136 competitors in the bike category.

After a spectacular performance in Stage 1, Branch leads the field with a healthy 12-minute advantage.

The Hero squad also displayed remarkable camaraderie and commitment. Joaquim Rodrigues crashed and fell head over

On top: Branch leads the field with a 12-minute advantage. AFP

on the ground losing consciousness. Joan Barreda and Sebastian Buhler, competing in the Rally GP class, reached the accident spot shortly, stopped to take care of their teammate and waited until he was evacuated by helicopter to the hospital.

Branch too found fellow competitor Toscha Schareina crashing, and decided to remain by his side until medical assistance arrived. Exhausted to the core, Barreda and Buhler also crossed the finish line of the extreme challenge in the top-15.

Lovepreet and Gurdeep win

Sports Bureau

Lovepreet Singh and Gurdeep Singh took the men's 109kg and +109kg titles respectively on the final day of the National weightlifting championships at Itanagar on Sunday.

Lovepreet totalled 345kg to win by 13kg. Gurdeep totalled 362kg.

The results: Men: 109kg: 1. Lovepreet Singh (SSCB) snatch 160kg, clean and jerk 185kg, total 345kg; 2. Mohd. Jameer Hussain (SSCB) 148kg, 184kg, 332kg; 3. Naveen (Har) 144kg, 184kg, 328kg; +109kg: 1. Gurdeep Singh (RSPB) 161kg, 201kg, 362kg; 2. S. Rudramayan (RSPB) 165kg, 187kg, 352kg; 3. Hitesh Kumar (SSCB) 147kg, 190kg, 337kg.

Team titles: Senior men: RSPB, Best lifter: Jeremy Lalrinnunga (67kg, Miz); **Senior women:** RSPB, **Best lifter:** Dipali Gursale (45kg, RSPB).

Lashka to repeat in the HPSL Byerly Turk Million

RACING

HYDERABAD: The three-year-old filly Lashka, who won well in her last start, should score an encore in the HPSL Byerly Turk Million (Gr. 3), the feature event of the Monday's (Jan. 8) races.

1 DECCAN PRINCE PLATE (DIV. II) (1,200m), rated 20 to 45 (Cat. III), 12.50 p.m.: 1. Silver Act (7) Shivansh 60, 2. Milton Keynes (3) Mukesh Kumar 59, 3. Precious (5) Antony Raj 58.5, 4. Stoli (4) Md. Ekram Alam 57, 5. Minecraft (1) Ashad Asbar 56, 6. Dali's Champion (6) Kuldeep Singh (Sr) 55.5, 7. Rochelle (8) Ajay Kumar 55 and 8. Royal Pal (2) Nakhat Singh 52.

1. SILVER ACT, 2. ROCHELLE, 3. PRECIOUS

2 DECCAN PRINCE PLATE (DIV. I) (1,200m), rated 20 to 45 (Cat. III), 1.20: 1. Only My Way (6) Mukesh Kumar 60, 2. Shadow Fax (7) Shivansh 58, 3. Pontefract (8) Md. Ekram Alam 57, 4. Star Cruise (5) Kuldeep Singh (Sr) 56, 5. Silver Lining (4) Afroz Khan 55, 6. Planet Super (3) Kuldeep SIngh (Jr) 52.5, 7. Blue Label (2) Nakhat Singh 51 and 8. Glimmer Of Hope (1) Surya Prakash 50.

1. SHADOW FAX, 2. SILVER LINING, 3. PONTEFRACT

3 G. VASUDEV REDDY MEMORIAL CUP (DIV. II) (1,400m), rated 40 to 65 (Cat. II), 1.50: 1. Proud Mary (1) P. Trevor 60, 2. La Mirage (4) A.A. Vikrant 57, 3. Splendour On Grass (8) P. Sai Kumar 56, 4. D Yes Boss (3) P. Ajeeth Kumar 55, 5. Golden Gazelle (2) Hindu Singh 54, 6. Burgundy Black (5) G. Naresh 53, 7. City Cruise (7) Nakhat Singh 51, 8. Colt Pistol (9) Abhay Singh 51, 9. Midsummer Star (6) Santosh Raj 51 and 10. Worcester (10) Afroz Khan 51.

1. PROUD MARY, 2. D YES BOSS, 3. WORCESTER

4 AGOSTINI PLATE (1,600m), Maiden, 4-y-o and upward, rated 20 to 45 (Cat. III), 2.25: 1. Trishul (5) Antony Raj 60, 2. Caraxes (4) A. Imran Khan 59.5, 3. N R I Skypower (2) Shivansh 59.5, 4. Magical Power (3) Surya Prakash 57, 5. Track Blazer (1) Ashad Asbar 57, 6. Taaliyah (6) Afroz Khan 56.5 and 7. Nav Lakhaa (7) G. Naresh 53.

1. N R I SKYPOWER, 2. TRISHUL, 3. CARAXES

5 G. VASUDEV REDDY MEMORIAL CUP (DIV. I) (1,400m), rated 40 to 65 (Cat. II), 3.00: 1. Angelita (1) Ajay Kumar 60, 2. Carlisle (2) Mukesh Kumar 58, 3. Wallop And Gallop (10) P. Ajeeth Kumar 57, 4. Malibu (3) Kuldeep Singh (Sr) 55.5, 5. Terenga (9) Antony Raj 54.5, 6. Star Medal (4) Md. Ekram Alam 53.5, 7. Clare (7) Md. Ismail 52, 8. Australia (8) P. Sai Kumar 51.5, 9. Fara (6) G. Naresh 51.5 and 10. Honourable Lady (5) Santosh Raj 51.

1. STAR MEDAL, 2. TERENGA, 3. AUSTRALIA

6 KASU BRAHMANANDA REDDY MEMORIAL CUP (2,000m), rated 60 to 85 (Cat. II), 3.35: 1. Painted Apache (7) P. Ajeeth Kumar 61, 2. Huntingdon (6) Mukesh Kumar 59.5, 3. Yesterday (2) Surya Prakash 58, 4. Truth (5) Imran Chisty 56.5, 5. High Command (3) Antony Raj 55.5, 6. Anab E Shahi (1) Hindu Singh 52.5 and 7. Just Incredible (4) Kuldeep Singh (Sr) 50.

1. TRUTH, 2. HUNTINGDON, 3. HIGH COMMAND

7 HPSL BYERLY TURK MILLION (Gr. 3) (1,200m) (Terms), Fillies 3-y-o only, 4.10: 1. Glorious Power (4) Afroz Khan 56, 2. Lashka (6) Antony Raj 56, 3. Amboseli (1) Mohit Singh 53, 4. Del Aviz (2) P. Trevor 53, 5. Star Forever (3) P. Sai Kumar 53 and 6. Star Of Night (5) Hindu Singh 53.

1. LASHKA, 2. DEL AVIZ, 3. GLORIOUS POWER

8 MOMENT OF GLORY PLATE (DIV. II) (1,200m), rated up to 25 (Cat. III), 4.45: 1. American FLame (2) G. Naresh 60, 2. D Battle (4) P. Ajeeth Kumar 60, 3. It's My Life (9) Ajay Kumar 60, 4. Nkalanzinzi (8) Imran Chisty 60, 5. Eminency (7) R.S. Jodha 59, 6. Ampere's Touch (3) N.B. Kuldeep 57.5, 7. Black Opal (6) Shivansh 57, 8. The Platinum Queen (1) Santosh Raj 55.5 and 9. Blue Brigade (5) Kuldeep Singh (Jr) 50.5.

1. IT'S MY LIFE, 2. D BATTLE, 3. BLUE BRIGADE

Day's Best: **LASHKA**
Jackpot: 4, 5, 6, 7 & 8.
Mini Jackpot: (i) 2, 3, 4 & 5. (ii) 5, 6, 7 & 8.
Treble: (i) 1, 2 & 3, (ii) 3, 4 & 5, (iii) 6, 7 & 8.
Tanala: All races.

LIVE TELECAST

Ranji Trophy: Jio Cinema App, 9.30 a.m. onwards

Sri Lanka vs Zimbabwe: 2nd ODI, Sony Sports Ten 5 (SD & HD) & LIV, 2.30 p.m.

Ultimate Kho-Kho: Sony Sports Ten 1 (SD & HD) & LIV, 7 & 8.45 p.m.

PKL: Star Sports 2 (SD & HD) & Hotstar, 8 p.m. onwards

PROUD OF THE TEAM

India is one of the best travelling sides, Ashwin reacts to Vaughan

PTI

R. Ashwin hit back at Michael Vaughan's remark that India is 'underachievers' and stated that the team has been one of the best travelling sides in Tests. "Yes, we haven't won ICC trophies for years... but the Test team has been one of the best travelling teams. We have seen many great results," Ashwin said.

LONGEVITY

Australia's Perry makes record 300 international appearances

EMMANUAL YOGINI

Ellyse Perry, on Sunday, became Australia's first woman cricketer to make 300 appearances for the country across formats. "I'm absolutely loving the opportunity to be a part of this group, and I think if I'm in the same phase as I am at the moment, then I'd love to play 400," Perry said.

ELITE CLUB

Deepti completes the 1000-100 double in T20Is, fourth to do so

EMMANUAL YOGINI

Deepti Sharma became the first Indian to complete the double of 1000 runs and 100 wickets in T20Is when she made a 27-ball 30 in the second match against Australia on Sunday. She is the fourth player to achieve the milestone after Ellyse Perry (Australia), Sophie Devine (New Zealand) and Nida Dar (Pakistan).

ENGROSSING BATTLES

Paltan pip Thalaivas, Steelers get the better of Warriors

SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

Puneri Paltan edged past Tamil Thalaivas 29-26 in a thrilling Pro Kabaddi League Season 10 contest in Mumbai on Sunday. Mohammadreza Chiyaneh Shadloui (five tackle points, three raid points) shone for Paltan. Haryana Steelers produced a defensive masterclass to beat Bengal Warriors 41-35 in the second match.

Skipper Rohit, Kohli back in T20I squad

Stalwarts: Rohit and Kohli being back in the mix hints the two will likely be part of the T20 World Cup. FILE PHOTO

AFGHANISTAN IN IND

Sports Bureau
VALSAD

Rohit Sharma will lead India in the three-match T20Is against Afghanistan starting on January 11 in Mohali. The men's senior selection committee announced a 16-member squad for the series, with star batter Virat Kohli also returning to the T20 squad after over a year.

The three matches will be India's last international outing in the shortest format before the ICC T20 World Cup, to be held later in the year in the West Indies and the USA. Rohit and Kohli last played international T20s in the semifinals of the 2022 World Cup. There was speculation about whether the two senior players would be part of T20s going forward, but the announcement hints the two will likely be part of the world event.

Injury worries

Meanwhile, Hardik Pandya, Suryakumar Yadav, and Ruturaj Gaikwad are yet to recover from their injuries.

While Hardik injured his ankle in the World Cup game against Bangladesh, Suryakumar injured his ankle in the third T20I against South Africa in Johannesburg. Jasprit Bumrah, Mohammed Siraj and Ravindra Jadeja have been rested for the series.

The squad: Rohit Sharma (Capt.), Shubman Gill, Yashasvi Jaiswal, Virat Kohli, Tilak Varma, Rinku Singh, Jitesh Sharma (wk), Sanju Samson (wk), Shivam Dube, Washington Sundar, Axar Patel, Ravi Bishnoi, Kuldeep Yadav, Arshdeep Singh, Avesh Khan, and Mukesh Kumar.

Fixtures: Jan. 11: Mohali; **Jan. 14:** Indore; **Jan. 17:** Bengaluru.

Garth, Perry shine in a low-scoring encounter as Australia levels series

The latter makes her 300th international game special by finishing the match with a six; visitors chase down 131 with six wickets to spare

AUSTRALIA IN INDIA

Shayan Acharya
NAVI MUMBAI

Chants of 'India, India' echoed at the DY Patil Stadium on Sunday as Shafali Verma and Smriti Mandhana walked out to bat in the second T20I against Australia. After a convincing win in the series opener, the expectations were high from the home team and a 42,000-plus strong crowd ensured that they backed the Women in Blue to the hilt.

However, it all turned futile in the end as a batting collapse saw India crawling to 130 for eight before Australia rode on an unbeaten 34 (21b, 3x4, 2x6) by Ellyse Perry – featuring in her 300th international fixture – to clinch a six-wicket win and square the series.

While the Indian batters, barring Deepti Sharma (30, 27b, 5x4), failed to convert the start, it was a commendable bowling effort by Australia. Overcoming an abject performance in the previous game, Kim Garth (two for 27) dealt an early blow to the home team, trapping Shafali LBW and followed it up with the precious scalp of Jemimah Rodrigues, who was caught behind the stumps by Alyssa Healy after starting with three fours.

Double strike: Garth's spell (4-0-27-2) set up a thumping win for Australia. EMMANUAL YOGINI

Having lost two of its big hitters early, India struggled to 33 for two in the PowerPlay. Coming on the back of a half-century, Smriti did hit a six and a couple of boundaries, but she could not control a short ball from Annabel Sutherland and pulled one straight to Perry at deep mid-wicket.

With captain Harmanpreet Kaur, too, struggling, Deepti and Richa Ghosh forged a 33-run partnership for the fifth wicket, providing a ray of hope. Richa hammered a massive six off Ashleigh Gardner but failed to push on for a big score and was trapped leg-before off a slower delivery from Georgia Wareham. At one point, it looked difficult for India to breach the 120-run mark, but Deepti struck a few boundaries towards the end.

Australia began the chase steadily with captain Healy and Mooney stitching a 51-run opening stand. After a four-for in the opening game, the hopes were high for young Titas Sadhu.

However, Healy hammered two consecutive boundaries in her opening over. It looked like a cakewalk for the Aussies before Deepti struck in the eighth over, removing Healy and then got her second wicket in Mooney in her next over, courtesy a lightning stumping by Richa.

Though Australia lost Tahlia McGrath and Ashleigh Gardner after that, Perry and the in-form Phoebe Litchfield (18 n.o., 12b, 3x4) took the team past the finish line with an unbroken 36-run stand. Litchfield hit a couple of boundaries off Shreyanka Patil in the 19th over before Perry sealed it with a six.

SCOREBOARD

INDIA

Shafali Verma lbw b Garth 1 *(6b)*, Smriti Mandhana c Perry b Sutherland 23 *(26b, 2x4, 1x6)*, Jemimah Rodrigues c Healy b Garth 13 *(9b, 3x4)*, Harmanpreet Kaur c Perry b Gardner 6 *(12b)*, Richa Ghosh lbw b Wareham 23 *(19b, 2x4, 1x6)*, Deepti Sharma run out 30 *(27b, 5x4)*, Pooja Vastrakar lbw b Wareham 9 *(12b)*, Amanjot Kaur c McGrath b Sutherland 4 *(2b, 1x4)*, Shreyanka Patil (not out) 7 *(8b, 1x4)*; Extras (b-1, lb-5, nb-1, w-7): 14; Total (for eight wkts. in 20 overs): 130.

FALL OF WICKETS

1-4 (Shafali, 1.4 overs), 2-20 (Jemimah, 3.6), 3-42 (Smriti, 7.5), 4-54 (Harmanpreet, 10.1), 5-87 (Richa, 14.1), 6-102 (Pooja, 16.6), 7-107 (Amanjot, 17.4), 8-130 (Deepti, 19.6).

AUSTRALIA BOWLING

Schutt 4-0-29-0, Garth 4-0-27-2, Gardner 4-0-33-1, Sutherland 4-0-18-2, Wareham 4-0-17-2.

AUSTRALIA

Alyssa Healy c Shreyanka b Deepti 26 *(21b, 4x4)*, Beth Mooney st. Richa b Deepti 20 *(29b, 2x4)*, Tahlia McGrath c Richa b Shreyanka 19 *(21b, 3x4)*, Ellyse Perry (not out) 34 *(21b, 3x4, 2x6)*, Ashleigh Gardner c Richa b Pooja 7 *(10b, 1x4)*, Phoebe Litchfield (not out) 18 *(12b, 3x4)*; Extras (lb-1, w-8): 9; Total (for four wkts. in 19 overs): 133.

FALL OF WICKETS

1-51 (Healy, 7.1), 2-58 (Mooney, 9.1), 3-89 (McGrath, 13.5), 4-97 (Gardner, 15.4).

INDIA BOWLING

Renuka 4-0-22-0, Titas 3-0-21-0, Shreyanka 4-0-40-1, Deepti 4-0-22-2, Amanjot 2-0-19-0, Pooja 2-0-8-1.

Toss: Australia; **PoM:** Garth.
Australia won by six wickets with one over remaining to level series 1-1.
Third and final T20I: January 9, 7 p.m.

Coming back was almost like a debut for me, says Ngidi

CRICKET

P.K. Ajith Kumar
CAPE TOWN

He was playing Test cricket after a year's interval, but Lungi Ngidi looked lethal against India at Newlands. He has often tormented India.

Ngidi was Player-of-the-Match against India on his Test debut, claiming six for 39 in the second innings to set up South Africa's victory at Centurion five years ago. That show opened the door to the IPL.

He was part of the Chennai Super Kings team that won the IPL 2018 and 2021; though he has moved to Delhi Capitals, he is still good friends with his former teammates from CSK. He is looking forward to returning to India for the new season of the IPL.

Ngidi took three wickets in an over in India's first innings in the second Test, which finished well inside two days. But it wasn't easy, Ngidi said in an interview to *The Hindu*.

"Coming back into the team and to bowl in a crucial Test, I felt nervous, and it was almost like a debut for me," said the 27-year-old pacer.

Buzzing again: Ngidi, despite returning to top-flight cricket after a year's break, bowled an impressive spell at Cape Town. AFP

"I was happy that I could deliver."

The wicket at Newlands has attracted a lot of criticism: nobody, least of all the financially troubled Western Province Cricket Association, wanted a Test to last just a day and a half. "The wicket had a lot more bounce than I expected," Ngidi said. "And there was sideways movement as well, making life difficult for the batters."

He said he enjoyed his battles with the Indian batters over the years. "I know how hard it is to play Test cricket in India and I would like to make use of the home advantage when we play them here," he said. "India has some fantastic batters and when they arrive at the wicket and their statistics are shown on the scoreboard, we know we have to get these batters out soon; if not it would be a very long day in the field. That makes me even more competitive."

His competitive nature has also helped CSK at the IPL. "It was after my Test debut against India that I got to play at the IPL," he recalled. "I was fortunate that I played for Chennai, which I grew up supporting. I had told my dad that I dreamt of playing for CSK, and we won the title in my very first IPL. It has been great playing alongside the likes of M.S. Dhoni, Faf du Plessis, Suresh Raina, Dwayne Bravo, Ravindra Jadeja, M. Vijay and Shardul Thakur."

Ngidi has high regard for Indian pacers. "Mohammed Siraj has impressed me a lot. He showed promise and then became better and better," he said. "Umesh Yadav has been a favourite as well."

Injured Nadal withdraws from Australian Open

Not the expected comeback: Nadal posted he will be flying back to Spain after scans revealed he had a small muscular tear. AFP

TENNIS

Associated Press
MELBOURNE

Rafael Nadal withdrew from the Australian Open with an injury a week before the season's first Major was due to start after playing just one tournament in his comeback from 12 months on the sidelines.

Nadal said he had concerns over his surgically repaired hip after needing a medical timeout in the third set of his Brisbane International quarterfinal loss to Jordan Thompson on Friday. The 22-time Major winner initially said it seemed like more of a muscular problem than the tendon issue that caused him pain last year.

But he posted on social media on Sunday that scans after he arrived in Melbourne revealed a small tear in the muscle and he was flying back to Spain for treatment. "Right now I am not ready to compete at the maximum level," he posted on X.

"I have worked very hard during the year for this comeback and as I always mentioned my goal is to be at my best level in three months," he said.

Nadal was playing on a wild card in Brisbane but had a protected ranking for the Australian Open that would have given him a start in the 128-player main draw.

Zverev-led Germany beats Swiatek's Poland, clinches United Cup

United we win! Team Germany celebrates with the trophy. AFP

Agence France-Presse
SYDNEY

Zverev saved two match points to turn the tables on Hurkacz in an exciting contest

Alexander Zverev saved two match points in a gruelling three-set win over Hubert Hurkacz to help Germany upset top seeds Poland and clinch a maiden United Cup title in Sydney on Sunday.

The World No. 7 kept the tie alive with his never-say-die 6-7(7), 7-6(8), 6-4 victory after top-ranked Iga Swiatek had swept past Angelique Kerber 6-3, 6-0.

Zverev returned to partner Laura Siegemund and seal the title with a 6-4, 5-7, 10-4 win over Swiatek and Hurkacz in the deciding mixed doubles.

"It was a matter of millimetres today for you guys (Poland) to be the champions," Zverev said at the presentation ceremony.

Hurkacz and Zverev had not met since the 2021 ATP Finals, where the German was eventually crowned champion.

The results (final):
Germany bt Poland 2-1 (Kerber lost to Swiatek 3-6, 0-6; Zverev bt Hurkacz 6-7(7), 7-6(8), 6-4; Siegemund & Zverev bt Swiatek & Hurkacz 6-4, 5-7, 10-4).

INBRIEF

Mumbai Khiladis downs Rajasthan Warriors

Mumbai Khiladis recorded its second win of Ultimate Kho Kho Season 2, downing Rajasthan Warriors 29-27 at the Jawaharlal Nehru Indoor Stadium in Cuttack on Sunday.

De Villiers blames T20 cricket for short India-SA series

A.B. de Villiers is annoyed that India and South Africa played only a couple of Test matches in the just concluded series and blamed proliferation of T20 leagues across the world for the situation. "I am not happy that there is not a third Test. You have to blame T20 cricket going around the world for that," he said. "I do not know whom to blame, but I sense something is wrong."

ICC rejects Khawaja's appeal against armband sanction

Australia opener Usman Khawaja suffered a setback after his appeal against the sanction imposed on him for wearing a black armband during the opening Test against Pakistan was rejected by the International Cricket Council, according to a report in *the Sydney Morning Herald* on Sunday.

Prabhsimran and Abhishek take the fight to Karnataka

The former hits a century while the latter falls just nine runs short before Punjab stutters

Great start: Prabhsimran and Abhishek put on a big, delightful opening partnership of 192. KIRAN BAKALE

RANJI TROPHY

N. Sudarshan
HUBBALLI

Despite a first-rate rearguard action from Punjab's opening duo of Abhishek Sharma (91, 123b, 9x4, 3x6) and Prabhsimran Singh (100, 146b, 17x4), Karnataka maintained the upper hand on day three of the Ranji Trophy encounter at the here on Sunday.

The host, from an overnight 461 for six, declared at 514 for eight, giving itself a handsome 362-run lead. Abhishek and Prabhsimran combined for 192 splendid runs only for Karnataka to hit back in the final session with three wickets. At stumps, Punjab was 238 for three, still 124 runs in the red.

As long as Abhishek and Prabhsimran were at the crease, Karnataka felt the pressure. But for the catch substitute Kishan Bedare dropped at deep backward square-leg off Abhishek (on 68 and team score at 129) to deny pacer V. Koushik a breakthrough, the home side didn't have as much as a sniff.

Under the winter afternoon sunshine, the Punjab openers made merry. For the Karnataka spin combo of Rohit Kumar (debutant) and Shubhang Hegde (this being his fifth First Class match), it was a tough initiation into the responsibility of leading the attack in the absence of K. Gowtham and Shreyas Gopal.

The newbies struggled with their lengths, bowling either too full or short, and were duly carted around for 107 runs from 23 overs. Abhishek was especially severe on Rohit as one could gather from the three sixes and a four he smashed in a single over to bring up a run-a-ball half-century. Prabhsimran was less flashy but as effective. Though he took a liking to Shubhang (21 runs), he reserved his best for speedster V. Vyshak. Immediately after tea, he unleashed an immaculate cut and two sumptuous drives to move into the 90s. A swept four off part-timer R. Samarth and a nudged single brought him his fourth First Class ton.

But the very next ball, Samarth castled Abhishek, with the southpaw completely missing the line. Four deliveries later, Vidwath Kaverappa breached Prabhsimran's defence to land the visitor a double blow. A fine catch running backwards from mid-on by Rohit to send back Naman Dhir ensured that Karnataka was still in control.

The scores: Punjab — 1st innings: 152.

Karnataka — 1st innings: R. Samarth b Dutta 38, Mayank Agarwal c Dhir b Arshdeep 0, Devdutt Padikkal c Baltej b Dutta 193, Nikin Jose lbw b Dhir 8, Manish Pandey c Abhishek b Arshdeep 118, Sharath Srinivas lbw b Kaul 76, Shubhang Hegde c Mandeep b Dhir 27, V. Vyshak lbw b Arshdeep 19, Rohit Kumar (not out) 22, Vidwath Kaverappa (not out) 4; Extras (lb-7, w-1, nb-1): 9; Total (for eight wkts. decl. in 140 overs): 514.

Fall of wickets: 1-16, 2-92, 3-110, 4-344, 5-382, 6-441, 7-466, 8-508

Punjab bowling: Baltej 25-4-63-0, Arshdeep 28-1-92-3, Kaul 22-0-94-1, Dutta 22-1-84-2, Dhir 12-1-46-2, Markande 22-1-82-0, Abhishek 9-0-46-0.

Punjab — 2nd innings: Abhishek Sharma b Samarth 91, Prabhsimran Singh b Kaverappa 100, Naman Dhir c Rohit b Shubhang 20, Mandeep Singh (batting) 15, Nehal Wadhera (batting) 9; Extras (lb-2, nb-1): 3; Total (for three wkts. in 68 overs): 238.

Fall of wickets: 1-192, 2-192, 3-220.

Karnataka bowling: Kaverappa 13-3-28-1, Koushik 14-4-37-0, Vyshak 11-1-52-0, Rohit 10-0-53-0, Shubhang 13-1-54-1, Samarth 7-2-12-1.

RANJI TROPHY SCORES — ROUND 1, DAY 3

Staying power: Cheteshwar Pujara led the way once again for Saurashtra with an unbeaten 243. FILE PHOTO: VIJAY SONEJI

Elite: Group-A: At Rajkot: Jharkhand 142 & 140/2 in 45 overs (Kumar Deobrat 74 batting, Nazim Siddiquie 45) vs Saurashtra 578/4 decl. in 156 overs (Harvik Desai 85, Sheldon Jackson 54, Cheteshwar Pujara 243 n.o., Arpit Vasavada 68, Prerak Mankad 104 n.o.).
At Solapur: Manipur 137 & 114 in 55.2 overs (Siddhesh Veer 4/10) lost to Maharashtra 320. **Points: Maharashtra 7, Manipur 0.**
At Rohtak: Haryana 100/6 in 42 overs vs Rajasthan.
At Nagpur: Services 241 & 155 in 54.3 overs (Shubham Rohilla 52, Aditya Thakare 4/44) vs Vidarbha 219 in 83.1 overs (Akshay Wadkar 59, Varun Choudhary 6/47).
Group-B: At Visakhapatnam: Bengal 409 vs Andhra 339/6 in 133 overs (Prasanth Kumar 41, Hanuma Vihari 51, Ricky Bhui 107 batting).
At Patna: Mumbai 251 vs Bihar 100 in 44.5 overs (Mohit Avasthi 6/27) & 91/6 in 32 overs (Sharman Nigrodh 40, Shivam Dube 4/7).
At Raipur: Chhattisgarh 327 vs Assam 159 in 95 overs (Denish Das 52, Sourabh Majumdar 6/41) & 171/5 in 35 overs (Riyan Parag 82 batting).
At Alappuzha: Uttar Pradesh 302 & 219/1 in 62 overs (Aryan Juyal 115 batting, Samarth Singh 43, Priyam Garg 49 batting) vs Kerala 243 in 74 overs (Vishnu Vinod 74, Ankit Rajpoot 5/64).
Group-C: At Agartala: Tripura 484 & 151/5 decl. in 33.4 overs (Bikramkumar Das 45) vs Goa 135 in 48.5 overs (Deepraj Gaonkar 41, Abhijit Sarkar 4/24) & 48/3 in 20 overs.
At Hubballi: Punjab 152 & 238/3 in 68 overs (Abhishek Sharma 91, Prabhsimran Singh 100) vs Karnataka 514/8 decl. in 140 overs (Devdutt Padikkal 193, Manish Pandey 118, Srinivas Sharath 76).
At Valsad: Gujarat 236 & 312 in 84 overs (Manan Hingrajia 52, Umang Kumar 89, Ripal Patel 81, Sai Kishore 4/83) vs Tamil Nadu 250 & 32/2 in 15 overs.
At Chandigarh: Chandigarh 96 vs Railways 313/4 in 83 overs (no play).
Group-D: At Vadodara: Baroda 351 & 258/4 decl. in 61 overs (Shashwat Rawat 102, Vishnu Solanki 79) vs Odisha 178 & 103/1 in 40 overs (Shantanu Mishra 41 batting, Anurag Sarangi 56).
At Jammu: J&K 100 vs Himachal Pradesh 120/1 in 30 overs (Prashant Chopra 48 batting, Ankit Kalsi 40 batting).
At Dehradun: Madhya Pradesh 323 & 243/3 decl. in 68 overs (Yash Dubey 59, Shubham Sharma 86, Venkatesh Iyer 53 n.o.) vs Uttarakhand 192 in 81.5 overs (Aditya Tare 45, Dikshanshu Negi 53, Kumar Kartikeya 4/59) & 7/1 in 3.2 overs.
At Delhi: Delhi 148 & 126/8 in 40 overs (Abin Mathew 4/30) vs Puducherry 244 in 63.3 overs (Paras Ratnaparkhe 60, Krishna Pandey 44, Hrithik Shokeen 4/46).
Plate: At Nadiad: Sikkim 442/9 decl. vs Mizoram 214 in 68.5 overs (Agni Chopra 166, Lee Yong Lepcha 5/75, Ankur Malik 4/54) & 237/6 in 56 overs (Agni Chopra 92, Mohit Jangra 41 batting).
At Ahmedabad: Arunachal Pradesh 94 & 238 in 84.5 overs (Siddharth Balodi 43, Techi Neri 46, Dippu Sangma 5/54) lost to Meghalaya 504/9 decl. **Points:** Meghalaya 7, Arunachal 0.

Vaishali buoyed about being part of the Candidates Tournament

CHESS

S. Prasanna Venkatesan
CHENNAI

R. Vaishali said on Sunday that the sick leave she took from chess after last year's World Cup helped her light-heartedly approach her games and thus achieve great results.

"There was this thing that I had to get the GM title, a lot of pressure. After the World Cup, I got severely sick. For, like, two months I had to cancel many tournaments and training.

"I was just at home. I think somewhere there, I was taking everything lightly. I started taking a lot of things casually.

"The tournaments I played after that went well. I think I started enjoying the game, that moment. I started enjoying the little things around. Somewhere I think the perspective towards everything changed. I think that helped a lot," she said over phone after the Group e4 function here where she was felicitated.

Appreciation: Group e4 felicitated Vaishali in the presence of Viswanathan Anand on Sunday. B. JOTHI RAMALINGAM

"Grand Swiss, I didn't at all expect that I would win. I had a desire to become the World Champion. But I didn't expect to get to Candidates this soon!

"When I was playing Grand Swiss, I think no one knew about it. It was after the result, that people came to know. But Candidates is not like that. Everyone will be watching. So, I think there'll be pressure once the thing starts. I mean once we get closer to it. But at the moment I'm more excited for it," she added.

Talking about the impact of her GM title for and the modern state of Indian women's chess, she said: "After some 10-11 years, we are getting one more Grand Master in women's chess. So, definitely, this is a very good start. Like, someone has to do (something).

"I'm very happy that I did! Now, I'm very sure we'll be having many more Grand Masters in women's chess. I'm very happy that I'm the start for it!"

"In the last 5-6 years, it (Indian women's chess) has grown a lot. I mean we are slowly getting tournaments where there's equal prize money for men and women. These are the things that will get more women players competing professionally."

Nikhil Poojary upbeat ahead of his maiden AFC Asian Cup appearance

FOOTBALL

ANI
DOHA

Indian footballer Nikhil Poojary is excited to play his maiden Asian Football Confederation (AFC) Asian Cup, saying that the tournament is like a "mini World Cup" for him.

"It is going to be special, especially for those like me, who will make their Asian Cup debuts here. It's like a mini World Cup for us. All the top teams and players from Asia will be here, so it will be a good opportunity for us to test our levels," said Nikhil as quoted by an AIFF press release.

While an ACL injury in 2017 right after his first call-up to the National Team slowed his progress, eventually leading to him not being on the flight to UAE for the AFC Asian Cup 2019, a call-up to the national squad later that year would end unsatisfactorily in Qatar, where he would be substituted off in India's famous stalemate against the hosts in the FIFA World Cup 2022 Qualifier. Poojary would not resurface in the international arena for another four years, when he was finally called back for the Intercontinental Cup, followed by the SAFF Championship. The winger-turned-fullback, however, has grabbed the opportunity and produced performances that have merited his spot in the 2023 edition of the AFC Asian Cup.

Hungry for success: Nikhil Poojary would be looking to put on a show in the Asian Cup campaign. X@INDIANFOOTBALL

"People just see the international level, but there are so many battles one has to fight, just to be there. You need to go through so many steps to make your comeback. You battle injuries, you battle form, you have your battles at your club at the domestic level, and if these were not enough, you have to battle your internal demons as well," said Poojary."I am very thankful to the coaches for showing their trust and support in me," he said.

HI's 41-member core probable group for Junior women's camp

HOCKEY

Press Trust of India
NEW DELHI

Hockey India on Sunday named a 41-member core probable group for the junior women's national coaching camp that begins on Monday at the Sports Authority of India (SAI) Centre, Bengaluru.

The players were picked based on their performances in the domestic championships held in 2023, HI said in a release.

They will report to coach Tushar Khandker for a month-long camp that concludes on February 6.

"I have always believed that there is no dearth of talent in India.

"I look forward to working with this new group as these players will be closely watched and developed with focus on the next FIH Junior World Cup," Khandker said.

List of players in the 41-member core probable group: Goalkeepers: Vidyashree V., Aditi Maheshwari, Nidhi, Engil Harsharani Minz.
Defenders: Lalthantluangi, Niru Kullu, Mamita Oram, Thounjaojam Nirupama Devi, Jyoti Singh, Anjali Barwa, Pawanpreet Kaur, Puja Sahoo.
Midfielders: Priyanka Dogra, Rajni Karketta, F. Lalbi Aksiami, Manisha, Nirali Kujur, Hina Bano, Ksetrimayum Sonia Devi, Anisha Sahoo, Priyanka Yadav, Khaidem Shileima, Supriya Kujur, Jaisikdeep Kaur, Binima Dhan, Huda Khan, Sakshi Rana.
Forwards: Sonam, Sanjana Horo, Dechamma P.G., Ishika, Himanshi Sharad Gawande, Kanika Siwach, Nisha Minj, Yamunna, Geeta Yadav, Gurmail Kaur, Lalrinpuii, Munmuni Das, Ashwini Punjab Kolekar, Sunelita Toppo.
Standbys: Lakhimoni Majuwar (Goalkeeper), Mamteshwari Lahare (Defender), Sejal (Forward).

Milan has it easy against Empoli

SERIE A

Reuters
MILAN

Third-placed AC Milan secured a comfortable 3-0 win at Empoli thanks to goals from Ruben Loftus-Cheek, Olivier Giroud and Chaka Traore in Serie A on Sunday.

Milan seized the lead after 11 minutes when Rafael Leao surged past his marker on the wing, delivering a precise pass to Loftus-Cheek inside the box, who sidefooted the ball into the bottom corner.

The visitors extended their lead as Giroud scored from the penalty spot after 31 minutes, following a handball by Empoli's Yousef Maleh.

On target: Giroud scores Milan's second from the spot. REUTERS

Traore secured Milan's third goal two minutes before stoppage time from a counter-attack.

Milan is third in the standings with 39 points, while Empoli is second-from-bottom with 13 points.

The results: Frosinone 2 (Harroui 56, Soule 76-pen) lost to Monza 3 (Mota 18, Carboni 45, Soule 55-og).
Lecce 1 (Gendrey 31) drew with Cagliari 1 (Oristanio 68).
Empoli 0 lost to AC Milan 3 (Loftus-Cheek 11, Giroud 31-pen, Traore 88).

KARNATAKA ROUND-UP

Ilyaan and Rakshaan bail out Hyderabad

Ilyaan Sathani (94 n.o., 136b, 11x4, 4x6) and C.T.L. Rakshaan (36 n.o.), with an unfinished 143 partnership, helped Hyderabad reach 223 for six in 81 overs on the first day against Karnataka in the Col. C.K. Nayudu Trophy match in Mysuru on Sunday.

The scores: Hyderabad 223/6 in 81 overs (Ilyaan Sathani 94 n.o., Rakshaan 36 n.o., Nitish Reddy 38, Paras Raj 29, L. Manvanth Kumar 3/46) vs Karnataka.

Suresh Babu sizzles

Suresh Babu slammed five goals to power Bombers HC to a 8-3 win over Bangalore United HC in the KSHA-BHA A-division hockey league in Bengakuru on Sunday.

The result: Bombers HC 8 (Suresh Babu 4, 37, 43, 49, 57, Mahesh 32, D. Sanjay 47, Dhushal Kumar 55) bt Bangalore United HC 3 (Praveen 29, Anthony William 39, Aravind 55).

Shivank Bhatnagar advances

Shivank Bhatnagar took out Bharath Nishok Kumaran 6-3, 7-6 to enter the final round of the qualifying of the PET ITF Mandya Open 2024 tennis tournament on Sunday.

In another match, Vishnu Vardhan overcame Dheeraj Kodancha Srinivasan 6-0, 6-7 (6), [10-5].